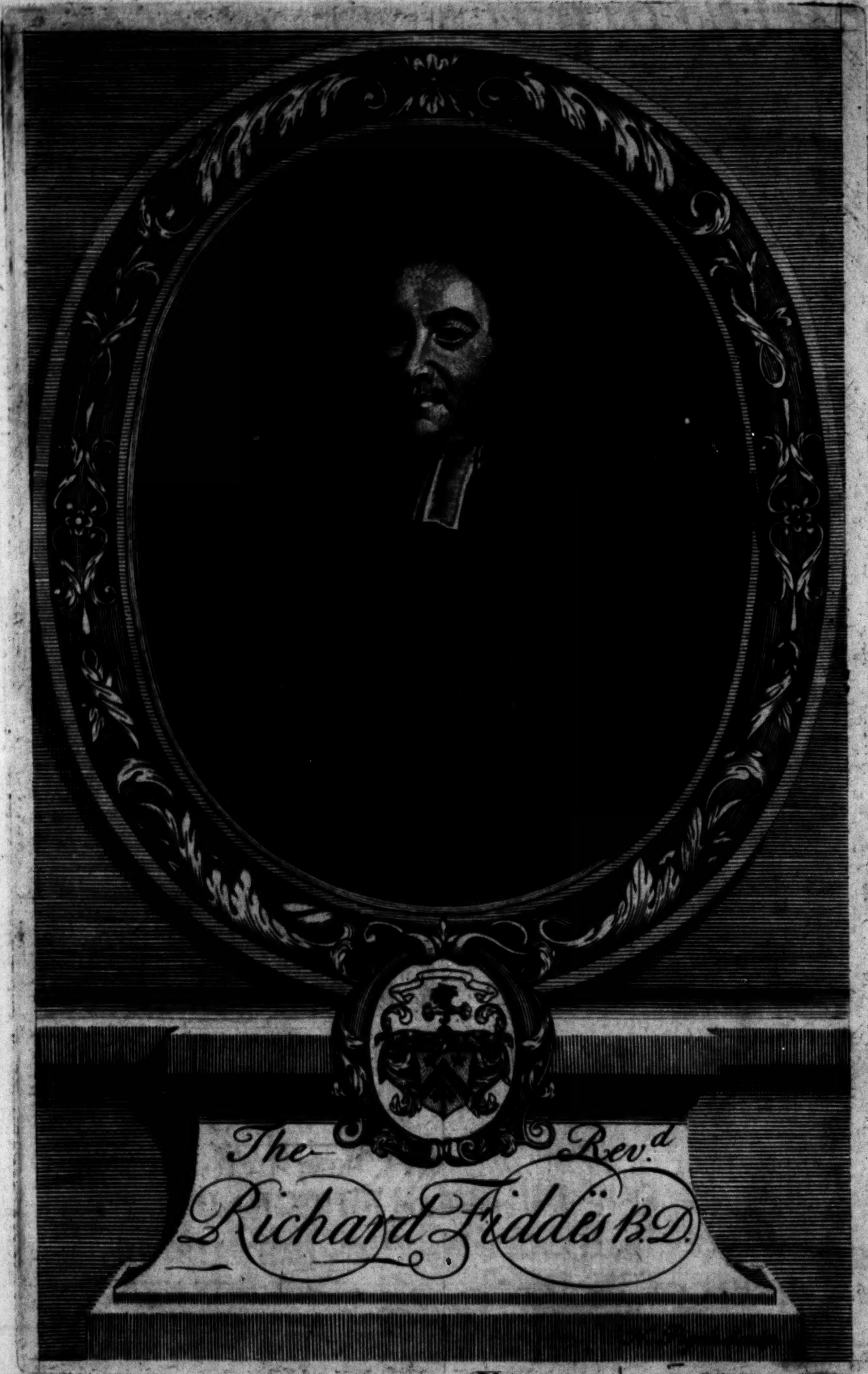
The Revd
Richard Fiddes B.D.

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THEOLOGIA SPECULATIVA:

OR, THE

FIRST PART

OF A

BODY

OF

DIVINITY

Under that Title.

Wherein are explain'd the

PRINCIPLES

OF

NATURAL and REVEAL'D

RELIGION.

By *RICHARD FIDDES*, B. D.
Rector of *Halſham*, and Chaplain to the Right
Honourable *Robert* Earl of *Oxford*, and Earl
Mortimer.

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1

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

TO

Moſt Reverend Father in GOD,

WILLIAM,

By Divine Providence,

Lord Archbiſhop of YORK,

May it pleaſe Your Grace,

YOUR high ſtation in the Church renders the following work, conſidered in the nature and deſign of it, proper to be addreſſed to Your Grace. But my relation to Your Lordſhip as a Paſtor under Your immediate charge and government, leaves me no ſcope

A for

for deliberation; whether I ſhould aſpire to the patronage of any other great name.

Yet, my Lord, abſtracting from the publick character of authority wherewith Your Grace is inveſted, I had been readily determin'd in a choice, to which Your perſonal qualifications appear ſo eminently favourable.

Among theſe, my Lord, the native candour of Your Temper, improv'd by the moſt polite and generous Education, is one conſiderable ornament. Not that all perſons, who have had the happineſs of being well born or educated are equally recommended by the ſame temper; yet we muſt naturally expect to find, and not indeed without reaſonable grounds, that it ſhould diſcover itſelf, and ſhine with the greateſt luſtre in ſuch perſons.

It would certainly, my Lord, conduce very much to preſerve the Honour and Dignity of the miniſterial Order in particular, could we, on occaſion of this, and every other bright quality proper to civil life, always unite the idea of a Gentleman with that of a Clergyman; there being ſeveral things, which, tho' not eſſential to a character, yet when found in conjunction with it, are highly ornamental and praiſe-worthy. For it is ordinarily not ſo much the thing done, as the doing it after a becoming manner, or with what we call a good grace, that gives it all the force and impreſſion upon our minds, which it ought to have, or whereof it is capable.

But there is no inſtance, my Lord, which renders the truth of what is here obſerv'd more conſpicuous, than where any perſon exactly knows how to reconcile the Dignity of the ſacred function, in the higheſt order of it, with the greateſt condeſcenſion and facility of addreſs.

My Lord, a vein of piety, which runs through all Your writings; which animates Your whole converſation, and diſcovers itſelf in every branch of Your Paſtoral office and government, was a farther motive, upon which I was induc'd to addreſs a work to Your Grace, whoſe principal deſign was to promote true and ſolid piety, upon clear and con-

[illegible] of it. For tho' the [illegible] of Religion are distinctly considered in the first volume, and [illegible] I was capable of resolving them, into their true and proper grounds; yet practice being the great end of knowledge, I have endeavoured to treat of them in such a manner, yet without formally drawing any practical inferences from them; that while they are intended to convey light to the mind, they may have ſome power, at leaſt, to move and affect the heart.

And, indeed, the ſpeculative doctrines of Religion, eſpecially of the Chriſtian Religion, have, in the direct tendency of them, on one account or other, a viſible and proper influence, both towards the advancement of our piety, and the perfection of our nature. There are no doctrines, whether of natural or reveal'd Religion, if we [illegible] them in [illegible] consequences, whence ſome [illegible] practical improvement may not be made.

What I here obſerve, is applicable to the moſt ſublime, and even to the moſt inexplicable myſteries of our holy faith. For what are they, ſo far as we know them in part, but myſteries of divine love and goodneſs? Two of the moſt powerful motives to obedience, which divine wiſdom itſelf, according to the meaſure, whereby we are able to judge of it, could have propoſ'd to ingenuous minds.

To this we may add, that a piety, which is not founded in any clear or diſtinct principles, is commonly apt to employ itſelf in the exterior forms of Religion, or the efforts of a heady and indiſcreet zeal; which yet is ſeldom or never to be depended on in the day of adverſity, or of any ſevere tryal. And tho' it is too evident, on the other hand, that men do not always act according to knowledge; we obſerve nevertheleſs, that where they do not diſtinctly underſtand the grounds, eſpecially the fundamental articles of Religion, all their pious reſolutions are much eaſier ſhaken, and themſelves, under any violent circumſtances of temptation, in far greater danger of falling away. We ſeldom, indeed, ſee men wholly corrupt in their morals or practice, but where they are either very ignorant, or very much corrupted with falſe principles.

My Lord,

YOUR Grace will obſerve, that in this addreſs I have not confin'd my ſelf to the common forms of a Dedication; I thought it rather incumbent on me to ſay ſomething in relation to the following work, and for that reaſon moſt proper to be laid before Your Lordſhip, than to attempt an eſſay on Your Lordſhip's many excellent qualities; which, I believe, would have been leſs acceptable to Your Grace, the more I had been capable of doing juſtice ſeverally to them. I ſhall only beg leave to obſerve, my Lord, that, in the judgment of a moſt excellent, pious, and diſcerning Princeſs, they were thought worthy, without the ordinary delays of proceeding or conſultation, on the like important occaſions, to recommend You to that high ſtation in the

Church, which You fill ſo well, and to the univerſal ſatisfaction both of the Clergy and Laity committed to Your charge. That Your Grace may long fill it, and with equal Dignity and Honour, is the prayer of,

My Lord,

Your GRACE's

moſt humble,

moſt obedient,

and dutiful Servant,

RI. FIDDES.

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THE PREFACE.

IT will be expected, that I ſhould ſay ſomething, by way of introduction, to the following work; in regard to the importance of my ſubject; the manner, wherein I have proſecuted it; and the motives, upon which I was induced to undertake it.

I. The ſubject of this great work, if we conſider it in point of ſpeculation only, is, of all others, at once the moſt ſublime, and entertaining: There is nothing, upon which we can employ the mind, capable of giving it ſo high a taſte of intellectual pleaſure. And indeed, as one part of our future happineſs will conſiſt in a clear and open view of divine truths, it is but reaſonable in the nature of the thing, that according to the gradual advances we are able to make towards a diſcovery of them here, we ſhould find the greater and more ſenſible delight, in our preſent meditations upon them. The natural thirſt of the ſoul after knowledge and, in a more particular manner, after divine knowledge, ſufficiently appears from hence; that we obſerve perſons, who conſider it ſimply as a perfection of the mind, and without any reſpect to the influence it ought to have on their conduct, yet frequently applying themſelves, and with much aſſiduity, to the purſuit of it.

If there be ſome very wicked men, who are leſs affected with the deſire and beauty of truth, it is becauſe they would ſin with the greater ſecurity, and are unwilling to open their eyes to a light, which *reproves*, and *makes manifeſt* their evil deeds; diſcovering to them with an evidence, they are not able to reſiſt, their preſent guilt, and, at the ſame time, the juſt reaſons of their future condemnation and miſery.

But when men have no intereſt, or ſiniſter ends to divert them from conſidering the great truths of religion, whether of a more abſtract nature, or practical, they muſt readily grant, that *Theology* is, in both reſpects, the nobleſt ſubject of a rational diſquiſition. None but the moſt ſtupid, or moſt abandon'd of mankind, in whom the common light of reaſon is in great meaſure, if not wholly extinct, can refuſe to pay to truth, in right of its native excellency, at leaſt the duty of inward admiration and eſteem.

But do not fact and experience lie more generally than we are willing to allow, againſt what has been ſaid concerning the power, which ſpeculative truth muſt naturally have over the minds of men? How many perſons are there, in whoſe conduct we diſcover nothing very irregular, and that do not even appear according to the rules of charity, to be far from the kingdom of God, who yet have little or no reliſh for abſtract and metaphyſical truths, tho' relating to the moſt important articles of religion, and propos'd after as juſt and perſpicuous a manner, as the nature of them will admit?

But this inſenſibility to the power of ſpeculative truths, which ſome perſons diſcover, ariſes merely from an accidental cauſe, and not from any thing diſagreeable in ſuch truths, ſimply conſider'd, to human underſtanding. Good men are not always happy in a great extent and force of thought; or perhaps where God has, in theſe reſpects, given certain perſons greater abilities, yet through an ill education, or a habit of idleneſs, the native ſtrength of their mind may have been weaken'd, or the capacity of it narrow'd to ſuch a degree, that they have now both leſs inclination and power to exert the proper faculties of them. For it is induſtry and application, whereby the life and vigour of the mind, like thoſe of the body, are ordinarily preſerved and augmented. Now as the pleaſure of ſpeculation always riſes, in proportion to the force and freedom of thought which attends it, where men have by any means contracted a certain weakneſs or indolence of mind, the labour of attention to ſpeculative truths muſt neceſſarily be, for that reaſon, more painful to them. And, at the ſame time, the pleaſure wherewith their labour is rewarded, will, by a like neceſſity, become leſs ſenſible.

But what muſt we then do to make people more attentive to ſpeculative truths, and more powerfully affected with them? Why, we muſt render, if we can, the difficulties of their attention leſs, and the pleaſure of it greater; there is no other way of engaging men in the ſearch after divine truth, with that reſolution and alacrity, which will bring them at laſt to the place of her habitation.

We ſhall leſſen the difficulty of their attention, by propoſing the ſpeculative points of religion in a clear and methodical manner; and by avoiding, ſo much as we are able, all ambiguous and equivocal expreſſions; which not only put a ſtop to the progreſs of the mind in its diſquiſitions, but ſometimes perplex and confound it in ſuch a manner, that it knows not which way to take, but grows weary and diſcourag'd without a deſire of carrying its fruitleſs and intricate purſuits any farther.

We may make the pleaſure of attention to the ſpeculative truths of religion greater, by propounding them in a lively and agreeable manner. This is not only done by an eaſy flow and vivacity of expreſſion, but by intermixing ſuch occaſional thoughts, or foreign ornaments which do not tend to break the ſeries of any argument, we may think fit to employ, but only to brighten or illuſtrate it. They, who have the greateſt ſtrength of mind, cannot long bear a ſteddy and uninterrupted view of the ſame object. The ſpirits which, according to the preſent laws of union between the ſoul and the body, are the occaſional cauſe of the mind's operating in a more free and lively manner, cannot

not always be kept up to ſuſtain ſuch a view, or ſupply the brain continually with ſufficient recruits to perform its operations, with equal vigour, and facility.

Towards remedying this natural defect, which, more or leſs, the mind of every man is ſubject to, ſome have thought proper to intermix their writings with incidental reflections of their own, or thoſe of other men; by which means the ſoul may gain ſome reſpit from a continued application to one thing, and without loſing ſight of it, tranſiently touch upon another: As to relieve the fatigue of the body, ſeats are plac'd in a long walk, on which it may for a time repoſe itſelf, and then proceed forward, without going out of the way.

I have endeavour'd to accommodate my ſelf to both theſe methods of recommending ſpeculative truths to the reader. My ſtyle, I hope, will be found generally clear and ſignificant; it has been my particular care to uſe ſuch terms, as are moſt free from ambiguity, or may give an idea of any thing foreign to what they were intended to ſtand for.

Yet I am ſenſible, as to ſome articles, the obſcurity of the ſubject matter, may render the manner of propoſing it, what caution ſoever has been us'd as to the expreſſion, leſs obvious and agreeable. But inconveniences of this kind in treating of very abſtract and difficult ſubjects, are unavoidable. Few perſons are capable at firſt view of comprehending uncommon principles, upon which they have never accuſtomed themſelves to meditate, how careful ſoever we may be to expreſs them in clear and common terms. But if there are ſome truths, as ſome there are, of the greateſt importance, which require more attention, the pains of it will be abundantly recompens'd by that complacency, which ariſes in the mind from ſuch diſcoveries, as it finds itſelf by degrees at leaſt capable of making concerning them.

Young divines eſpecially, for whoſe ſake I principally write, ought not to complain, if there are ſome things in divinity *hard to be underſtood*. In deſiring the office to which they are call'd, they deſir'd *a good work*; but withal ſo great and difficult a work, that they cannot uſe too much pains or application to qualify themſelves for a worthy diſcharge of it. They, whoſe duty it is to teach religion, are under a peculiar engagement from their character to know religion in all the parts, and all the reaſons of it; that they *may make full proof of their miniſtry, and by manifeſtation of the truth, commend themſelves to every man's conſcience in the ſight of God.*

Eſpecially at a time, when the principles of atheiſm and infidelity, for which free-thinking is of late ſubſtituted only as a ſofter name, do ſo openly diſcover themſelves; it is incumbent upon the younger ſtudents in divinity to apply themſelves with greater zeal and aſſiduity towards laying in a competent ſtock of divine knowledge, that *they may in all things approve themſelves as the miniſters of God*; and be more *able by ſound doctrine, both to exhort and convince the gainſayers.*

But how ſhall they qualify themſelves for theſe ends, without a general notion of the principles of religion, and particularly of the fundamental truths, upon which the proofs of it ſubſiſt. When they, who bear the ſacred character, are found deficient in this reſpect, the enemies of their order, who are generally enemies of all revealed religion, have an occaſion of inſulting them, agreeable to their deſires, and which, where they have skill, they have always malice enough to improve. This conſideration ſhould excite the younger clergy to fortify themſelves, as much as they can, againſt the attacks of unbelievers from what quarter ſoever; leſt an advantage be obtained over them, in prejudice to their own character, which cannot be too carefully ſupported, but more eſpecially to the diſhonour of him, *whoſe*, by a peculiar deſignation, *they are, and whom they ſerve*.

I ſhall not therefore make any apology to them, if in ſome points, and eſpecially concerning the being and attributes of God, I have enter'd into the detail of certain metaphyſical enquiries; whereof thoſe, who have leſs taſte or capacity for a ſtrict examination, may proceed to other points, which admit of a more plain and obvious explication; and which I have illuſtrated by expreſſions borrowed from the holy ſcriptures, without conſidering them, as having the ſanction of divine authority. In general, I have endeavoured to accommodate my way of writing to the taſte and capacity of my readers, and in conſulting their edification, have not thought it improper to intermix ſuch occaſional reflections, as might render the means of inſtructing them more pleaſant and agreeable. If it be objected againſt ſuch a method, that theological ſubjects require a ſolemnity in our treating upon them, which will not admit of it; and that it is below the dignity of ſacred truths, and the profound veneration they challenge from us; that we ſhould deviate in our ſearch after them from the ſtricteſt rules of reaſoning. I anſwer, that this objection will be found of little force if examined by the method of propounding divine truths, obſervable in the holy ſcriptures themſelves. Particularly, in the prophetical writings, and the diſcourſes of our bleſſed Saviour, which contain the moſt ſublime and important truths of religion, there are frequent tranſitions to things, of affinity indeed with the main ſubject, but which do not appear ſo much to have a neceſſary, as an uſeful and eaſy connection with it. We may obſerve in fact, that diſcourſes, wherein an author takes the liberty I am contending for, are generally in the greateſt reputation and eſteem. Why do not men read the works of the angelick, or thoſe of the ſubtile doctor with as much pleaſure as *Montaign*'s eſſays? It will be granted theſe two authors, of the firſt diſtinction in the ſchools, had both of them a great extent of thought, with a ſtrong, copious, and fruitful imagination. But the dry ſcholaſtick way, wherein they treat of the moſt weighty and moving ſubjects, makes the reader, who would always, if he could, find his pleaſure and entertainment in his inſtructions, leſs ſenſible of the force and evidence of them.

M. *Malebranch*, whoſe writings are ſo agreeable to thoſe who have any capacity or ſtrength of mind, has preſerved in them a middle way between the irregular and looſe excurſions which authors, in other reſpects polite enough, have affected; and the hard ſenſe of thoſe, who confine themſelves wholly to a ſtiff and cloſe way of argumentation, without regard to ſuch ornaments, as might be proper to relieve too long and laborious an attention of the reader.

Whatever incidental thoughts this celebrated author makes uſe of upon any ſubject, he always has it in his eye. I do not here ſpeak of his errors; he has advanc'd ſome notions, that are by no means tenable; but I ſpeak of his manner and qualifications in general, as a writer. Wherever he diffuſes light in the mind, he has an irreſiſtible power of moving the heart. The force and delicacy of his thoughts, with a certain dignity of mind, that animates every thing he ſays, do ſometimes even gain our aſſent before we well know what it is we aſſent to. And he, who would excel in theſe characters, eſpecially in the latter of them, will perhaps no where find the method of attaining them ſooner, if nature have not render'd all human methods unneceſſary to that end, than by being much converſant in the writings, which this father of the oratory has publiſh'd.

I cannot here omit to mention, what was obſerved to me by a very great man, and whoſe ſole authority is of more weight with me, than every thing but evidence, concerning the liberty which ſome authors who write upon abſtract ſubjects take towards facilitating the attention, and contributing to the pleaſure of their readers. It was his opinion, that ſubjects of a more abſtract nature do not eaſily admit ſuch a liberty. He that would form a ſyſtem of mathematicks would, for inſtance, proceed very unſucceſsfully in his work, ſhould he go about to embelliſh his maxims, poſtulates, or problems, at every turn, with moral or political reflections, how juſt and curious ſoever in themſelves, or in a more proper place.

But I take it with all ſubmiſſion to ſo great a name as that of the preſent biſhop of *Briſtol*, there is a difference as to the matter in queſtion between the mathematicks and ſpeculative points of divinity. In mathematicks, the relations of things are ſo various and complicated, that the leaſt diverſion of the mind breaks the chain by which thoſe relations are to be connected; ſo that we muſt begin its progreſs again to find out with certainty the reaſons of that connection. To which I may add, that the ſenſible repreſentation of what the mathematician is in ſearch of, by lines and figures, gives a ſort of amuſement to the mind, which leſſens, in ſome meaſure, the ſeverity of its applications. But in ſpeculative points of divinity, as the relations are not ſo complicated, the underſtanding in its enquiries is more abſtracted from all ſenſible ideas, and every thing, that may be proper to affect the imagination, and ſo is kept to continual labour in a naked and ſteady view of truth, without any other object to divert or relieve it. However, I have endeavoured not to make uſe of any incidental reflections, where either they might tend to leſſen the force, or too much confound the method of my reaſoning.

As the ſtudy of theology is moſt pleaſant in ſpeculation, it muſt be granted moſt profitable with reſpect to the greateſt and moſt deſirable advantages which mankind can propoſe to themſelves. Theological truths are thoſe, wherein we are above all others, moſt intereſted; eſpecially ſuch of them, as diſcover to us the reaſons, motives, and ends of a religious practice, and are neceſſary to the regulation of our conduct, both with regard to our preſent, and future happineſs.

Upon this conſideration, one would think, how inſenſible ſoever men may be to the force of truth purely ſpeculative, yet as to what concerns them in ſo near and tender a point, as that of intereſt, they ſhould be more deſirous to diſcover the light, which leads them to it. The moſt dull and ſtupid of mankind are ſometimes obſerv'd to have a ſtrange ſagacity, in what relates to the principles or maxims of ſelf-love, in promoting which, their induſtry and application are no leſs viſible. And yet it muſt be own'd, that practical divinity itſelf, which, in regard of our greateſt intereſts, is of the laſt importance to us, is not always in that credit and eſteem with thoſe, who apply themſelves to reading, and have a fine capacity for it, as books relating to human learning, or civil life, or even thoſe perhaps, which are written in a more looſe and immoral ſtrain.

What can be the reaſon of ſo irregular and unequal a judgment? It cannot ariſe from the ſubject matter of divinity, and muſt therefore be owing to ſomething leſs agreeable in the method, according to which it is commonly treated of. For as to the ſeveral principles whereof it is compos'd, they certainly afford us at once the nobleſt topicks of invention, and the greateſt ſupply of arguments proper to move the heart, that can poſſibly be propos'd to the mind.

The reaſon therefore why practical diſcourſes on the ſubjects of religion have not always thoſe ſenſible effects on the paſſions of men, which might be expected from the natural force of them, is to be charg'd on ſome defect as to the manner of propounding them, wherein it muſt be granted, that very learned men, and great divines, are not always the moſt happy; nay, the more learned men are, they ſometimes happen to be leſs elegant and polite; their reaſons are dry and ſtiff; they force their reader, indeed, to go along with them, but they give him no reſpit to breathe in, or to look about him. A cloſe and exact way of argumentation, tho' upon ſubjects which immediately relate to practice, is more peculiar to the genius of our Engliſh writers. But whether ſuch a method be ſo edifying, as if men, who think regularly, ſhould yet ſometimes ſtoop to the weakneſs of thoſe, who are not able to carry a long and weighty train of proofs, may perhaps admit of diſpute. Whatever the occaſion of it be, there is cauſe to ſuſpect, that the number of thoſe, who read books of hiſtory and humanity, or perhaps of humour, and which are principally addreſs'd to the imagination, is much greater than of thoſe, who apply themſelves with equal pleaſure and attention to the reading of divinity; whether ſpeculative or practical. For which the moſt probable account to be given, is, that other writers take a greater ſcope, than divines commonly do, in applying to the paſſions and affections of men, and diſcover for that reaſon a greater art in touching the ſecret ſprings of them.

Yet a man, you will ſay, who travels, is not oblig'd to make any obſervations upon the road, but what tend to forward him in his journey; to ſtand upon taking a ſurvey of the fine ſeats or landskips, the woods or rivers that ſucceſſively preſent themſelves to his eye, is foreign to his main buſineſs. He is to haſten, eſpecially if the affair he goes upon be very important, as ſoon as he can, to the place, for which he deſigns, without amuſing himſelf with things of no concernment to him. Few travellers will be pleas'd with ſuch maxims, as few readers are able to follow a continued and abſtract view of truth, without being ſometimes entertain'd with thoſe incidents, which offer themſelves moſt naturally by the way.

Another reaſon, why books of divinity are leſs read, tho' upon ſubjects relating to moral life, is from the reproach which ſome compoſitions of that kind are obſerv'd, I will not ſay how deſervedly, to lie under. Generally ſpeaking, there are, I ſhould rather perhaps ſay, there have been no performances in our language more juſt, methodical, and moving, than our ſermons: And yet there are few things publiſh'd, which leſs anſwer the end of their publication, to thoſe who are concern'd in it. Whether the diſcredit, which compoſitions of this kind are ſo viſibly fallen under, may be owing to any little arts of flattery and inſinuation, whereby to recommend themſelves to favour, preachers ſometimes make no ſcruple to proſtitute and debaſe their character, I ſhall not take upon me to determine. This muſt be granted, that whatever perſonal charge may lie againſt a preacher, it does by no means alter the nature or quality of what is well, and methodically ſaid by him. Tho' it is too natural indeed for men, when they have taken what they apprehend a cauſe of juſt prejudice againſt any preacher, from his handling the word of God deceitfully upon ſome finiſter proſpects, to entertain a ſecret contempt of every thing that comes from him, and there could be no great hopes to ſuch a one, how authentick ſoever his commiſſion may be, of having any good ſucceſs in this part of his miniſtry, tho' he *could ſpeak with the tongue of men and angels.*

This common prejudice, from what cauſe ſoever it ariſes, againſt reading of ſermons, has ill effects towards prepoſſeſſing the minds of men, againſt all treatiſes of divinity, and ſometimes againſt the very function of divines; tho', with reſpect to ſome modern ſermons, perhaps other prejudices may ariſe from conſiderations affecting the compoſition itſelf, which often wants that elegance and manly force, whereby our beſt preachers have been diſtinguiſh'd in ſuch a manner abroad, that, however foreigners might diſpute with us for ſuperiority with reſpect to arts and ſciences in general, yet the prize of eloquence has, I think, been univerſally yielded to our Engliſh divines, with reſpect to their character, as preachers.

II. I am, in the next place, to give a particular account of the manner wherein I have proſecuted this work.

My firſt and greateſt deſign was to give a rational account of the principles both of natural and revealed religion, and to reſolve them into their true and proper grounds. I know there have been ſome pious and learned men in the church of *Rome*, who have endeavour'd to prove by reaſon, that we ought not in matters of religion to make uſe of reaſon. But, beſides the inconſiſtency of ſuch an attempt, we may obſerve, that the inſpir'd penmen both in the old and new teſtament frequently confirm what they ſay, in a human method of arguing; and ſometimes, without deſcending to any expreſs argument, by appealing to the common light and evidence of our own minds.

2. I have conſulted, and eſpecially upon articles of greater importance and difficulty, the beſt authors, and on certain occaſions have quoted them; but omitting, ſo much as I could, to

make a ſhew of that mechanical ſort of learning, which ſome writers affect to diſcover by a multiplicity of quotations; but which every man of a tolerable judgment, and in a good library, may eaſily know how to make himſelf maſter of: Yet where authority was proper to be cited, I have endeavour'd to pay a due regard to it, and may, on ſome occaſions, perhaps, be thought to have charg'd my margent with too long and ſuperfluous extracts. To which I ſhall only anſwer, that as I did not deſign to compile this work, wholly out of other authors, ſo I would not appear to ſhew any want of a juſt deference to them. I judg'd the middle way between theſe two extremes the moſt eligible; but, whether I have ſucceeded in it, muſt be left to the judgment of the reader. It has been often thought of indeed, as a work, which might be of very great ſervice, if a ſyſtem of divinity were compos'd from a judicious collection of our Engliſh ſermons. It may probably be allow'd, that moſt of the heads of divinity have been treated of after as accurate and juſt a manner in them, as in the works of the moſt celebrated authors now extant. This method was under conſideration, by ſome of my friends, but I could not for ſeveral reaſons come into it. The trouble of making continual tranſcripts, tho' out of the beſt authors, is what I readily acknowledge my ſelf unqualify'd for. Thoſe who are in a temper to ſuſtain the pains of compiling dictionaries, collating manuſcripts, or digeſting what they call common places, ſeem more peculiarly form'd by nature for ſuch a deſign. Not but that works of this kind are very uſeful to the publick; upon which account the authors of them, cannot be too well rewarded. The pennance they undergo,

dergo, and wherein the body appears to have as great a ſhare as the mind, admitting of ſo little pleaſure, what they have chiefly in proſpect muſt be ſuppos'd the common good and benefit of mankind; and therefore to proceed from the moſt generous principle that can be conceiv'd to influence any human action.

After all, the office of a tranſcriber is not only the moſt painful, but it always requires more time, to collect proper paſſages to be tranſcribed, and after we have run from book to book, from place to place, backwards and forwards, to digeſt them into a proper order, than is requiſite to furniſh out a compoſition of one's own; provided an author is in any meaſure capable of a ready and regular way of thinking, and has, by reading or reflection, laid in a competent ſtock of materials to work upon.

Beſides, the labour of making extracts, and the difficulty of connecting in a juſt and imperceptible manner, the ſentiments of other writers; there is nothing more apt to break, or divert the attention of the reader, than a ſenſible inequality of ſtyle, which I need not obſerve is very diſtaſteful to moſt, if not to all readers. Where ſeveral perſons indeed are introduc'd in any diſcourſe, a different manner of ſpeaking, according to their different characters or circumſtances, is not only allowable, but neceſſary to pleaſe; what is natural and juſt, having always a certain agreeableneſs in it to the mind: But an author who in a continued diſcourſe on the ſame ſubject, at every turn takes upon him a new character, and varies his diction, muſt in conſequence of the ſame reaſon, render it very harſh and diſtaſteful.

Upon theſe conſiderations, tho' I am ſenſible that neither my ſentiments, or diction, are ſo juſt or elegant, as thoſe of ſeveral perſons, from whom I might have made large citations; yet my work has the advantage of being in both reſpects more of a piece. However, if there be any perſon, who in purſuance of a method ſo often talk'd of, may think proper to extract a body of divinity out of our Engliſh ſermons, as he may be ſupply'd with materials for his purpoſe, eſpecially as to modern performances, at a very eaſy rate; ſo his pains in putting them together, may deſerve, for any thing I know, to be very well received by the publick.

It may notwithſtanding be ſometimes of great advantage, and eſpecially in caſes of difficulty, when there are very ſtrong preſumptions on both ſides of the queſtion, to cite the opinion of great and learned men; to which, without impoſing it as an article of faith, ſome deference at leaſt ought to be allow'd. It is alſo an argument of a becoming diffidence in any writer, where he is not able to demonſtrate, to ſhew at leaſt that he is not ſingular or aſſuming, but has great authorities to countenance and ſupport him. 'Tis diſingenuous then to charge thoſe extracts or references to the vanity of an author, which we ought to ſuppoſe he has employ'd, upon reaſons of modeſty.

Yet if ſome authors may poſſibly be ſuſpected of vanity, in multiplying a number of quotations, there are others no leſs vain in affecting the reputation of being furniſh'd with ſo large a ſtock of knowledge, or learning, that they have no occaſion to borrow the leaſt ſupplies from other men. But there was never, perhaps, a greater inſtance of affectation, in this reſpect, than *Epicurus*. *Diogenes Laertius* obſerves, that in three hundred volumes, which that atheiſtical wit publiſh'd, he had not ſo much as one quotation. But this was rather an argument that he excell'd in a copious invention than a good underſtanding; except he had been ſo happy, which does by no means appear, as to have made a better judgment than all other writers before him, in all the points whereof he treated. Or, perhaps, he thought ſo peculiar and extraordinary a character of his works might give them the greater air of the *marvellous*, and ſo ſupply the defects of his reaſoning in them, by raiſing the paſſion of admiration for himſelf.

Without making any farther reflections on the pride of this philoſopher, who after all, without acknowledging it, ow'd a great part of his works to the writings of *Democritus*; the narrow extent of our faculties, the long time requir'd to cultivate and improve them, and the difficulty of rendring our ſelves perfect maſters of any one ſcience, make it neceſſary that we ſhould be ſometimes beholden to the labours and induſtry of other men. Perſons of the firſt diſtinction in the learned world, have choſen to embelliſh their works with borrow'd ſentiments and illuſtrations. *Cicero*, *Seneca*, *Plutarch*, and, on many occaſions, *Ariſtotle*, have not thought it below them to uſe this method, and owe a great many beauties in their writings to it. For, after all, perhaps it requires more wit to apply a good thought on a pertinent occaſion, and in a proper place, than originally to invent it. We may farther obſerve, that when any great authority, when a dead author eſpecially is introduc'd ſpeaking to us, what is ſaid does naturally ſurprize us, and has a greater force towards awakening the attention, at the ſame time we are more apt to be prepoſſeſs'd in favour of the author we read, when he ſhews us what company he deſires to appear in, and that he has had at leaſt ſome tranſient acquaintance and converſation with great men.

3. In citing other authors, or referring to them, I have generally gone to the fountain, tho' ſometimes in caſes of leſs importance, or where I could not well come at the original, I have truſted to the fidelity of others, or to my own memory. Such a liberty ſhould rarely be taken, except as to things of a more indifferent nature, and where a ſentence or teſtimony ſeems to ſtand alone, without any neceſſary dependence on what goes before or follows. Where there is occaſion to ſuppoſe any ſuch dependence, it is abſolutely requiſite in juſtice to an author; and to the end, we may know his true ſentiments, that we ſhould have immediate recourſe to his writings.

4. Tho' I have not deduced, on all occaſions, the fundamental articles of natural or reveal'd religion in a chain of propoſitions; yet in proving the truth and certainty of divine revelation, I have taken this method; and even in my firſt book, where I prove the being and attributes of God, tho' the proofs of them are not formally ſo deduc'd, the reader, I hope, will obſerve they are not altogether without a proper and ſenſible connection.

5. I have taken the liberty to invert the order of my ſecond, and third head; for tho' the proofs of the creation and a providence might be clearly made out from the principles of natural reaſon, yet, it muſt be acknowledg'd, we are capable, by the aſſiſtance of divine revelati-

on, to treat of them after a more diſtinct ſatiſfactory manner, and in a more ample extent. Beſides, that there are certain diſcoveries, as well as difficulties, with reſpect to both theſe heads in the holy ſcriptures, which deſerve to be conſider'd, but could not properly have fallen under our conſideration, while we had nothing, but the natural light of our own minds, to direct us.

6. It has been my endeavour, in the conduct of this great work, to lay aſide all prepoſſeſſions, and to examine the ſtate of my ſeveral ſubjects, without regard to any other intereſts, but thoſe of pure and naked truth. The profound deference I owe to the principles and deciſions, of that excellent church, whereof I am an unworthy member, has not hinder'd me from conſidering ſome articles with a freedom, that becomes one, who is deſirous above all things, to inform himſelf concerning what he is to believe and to do, to be ſav'd. I have more eſpecially taken care, that no private or party conſiderations ſhould influence my enquiries, towards a reſolution in ſo important a point. And indeed, as party zeal is often the moſt vicious and irregular, the greateſt caution ſhould be uſ'd, that no religious principles ſhould be grafted on any ſecular projects or deſigns.

The reaſon of this caution was viſible in the controverſy about the five points both here at home and abroad. Diſtinctions in church and ſtate were form'd upon them, and thoſe, who went into ſuch diſtinctions, were alternately play'd, according to the prevailing and different intereſts above, againſt one another. But when theſe points were no longer conſider'd in relation to thoſe, who preſided at the helm of affairs, and it became indifferent to them, which party ſhould have the aſcendant, truth ſoon grew more prevalent; and thoſe doctrines, which were once generally receiv'd, now that people are at liberty to examine them, without any regard to their dependencies on great men, or their expectations from them, have been juſtly and almoſt univerſally exploded. Something of this nature may poſſibly have happen'd to divide us, concerning the divine right of epiſcopacy, and the invalidity of lay-adminiſtrations, in things, properly relating to the paſtoral office. The diſſenters bear a conſiderable ſhare in the ſtate, they are for that reaſon to be tenderly us'd. All times will not *bear ſound doctrine.* And 'tis allowable, where a juſt and righteous cauſe is diſtreſs'd, to employ foreign auxiliaries, and to treat them with a regard and condeſcenſion, which, when the danger upon which they were call'd in is over, may not be ſo abſolutely neceſſary: *There is a time for all things.*

How far theſe reaſons ought to have any weight, in order to juſtify a temporary condeſcenſion to the neceſſity of affairs, or iniquity of the times, I ſhall not take upon me to judge; the reader may determine upon ſo nice a point as he ſees fit. All I would infer is, that when it ſhall pleaſe God to put a period to our civil diſtinctions, the doctrine of thoſe, who oppoſe the divine right of Epiſcopacy, and the invalidity of lay-adminiſtrations, will be as univerſally exploded, as that of Calviniſm at preſent in the five diſtinguiſhing articles of it: At leaſt, men will not be in danger of ſuffering the greateſt miſeries of life, which human nature can ſuffer for adhering to the contrary doctrine.

7. I have occaſionally ſaid ſomething before concerning my diction, but think proper to add here ſomething farther upon that article. I have endeavour'd then, as much as I could, to expreſs my ſelf in a pure and chaſte ſtyle, without adopting foreign words, except in ſome very few inſtances, where our own language is viſibly deficient; and without employing forc'd and harſh metaphors, or indeed any figures or ſchemes of ſpeech, but what in my opinion might tend to illuſtrate my argument, rather than to ſhew a talent, I neither have any pretenſions to, nor ought to ſhew, if I could, in treating of the moſt ſacred and ſublime truths.

Wit, which may be allow'd to ſparkle in converſation, in eſſays of ſatyr or humour, and is, in its proper ſphere, of good ſervice towards expoſing the follies and common corruptions of mankind; yet has too low a character to be admitted in diſcourſes upon divine and religious ſubjects. For, beſides that perſons who excel in this talent, have not always the beſt taſte or judgment, and that a man often reaſons the worſe for having a lively imagination, and abundance of animal ſpirits in the fibres of his brain; reaſon, where it appears in a juſt light, does not need thoſe little arts, which wit ſo commonly employs towards procuring favour and attention. Nay, thoſe arts, even where men reaſon juſtly, create a ſuſpicion, that there is ſome deſign of impoſing that for reaſon upon us, which at the bottom is falſe and irrational, and intended not ſo much to convince the mind, as to dazle it by a ſprightlineſs and ſurprizing turn of thought, or expreſſion. So that a man of wit without judgment or probity, (and theſe three characters do not always concur) is of all others the moſt dangerous, not only in his writings, but his converſation. As he ſpeaks well and fluently, men are attentive to what he ſays, and as he ſpeaks with an air of confidence, eſpecially when his vanity is a little excited by the homage paid to him, and that air of ſubmiſſion which his admirers put on in his preſence, he domineers over them, and makes himſelf maſter of their underſtandings at pleaſure.

I have here obſerv'd one fruitful occaſion of error, both in civil and religious life, and wherewith even perſons of a good underſtanding, and great modeſty are ſometimes too apt to be impos'd upon. And, for this reaſon, when religion is the ſubject of our diſcourſe, whether in converſation or writing, we cannot too cautiouſly avoid every thing, that has the appearance of artifice, or any indirect inſinuation.

I the rather obſerve this, becauſe it has been objected againſt certain of our Engliſh divines, that in treating concerning the moſt ſacred and ſublime truths of religion, they have ſometimes given too great a ſcope to their imagination; and to ſhew their wit deſcended below the dignity of their ſubject, in diminution of their character, to things trifling and ludicrous. It has been obſerv'd, and perhaps upon too juſt grounds, concerning the diſcourſes of a late very eminent and learned divine, that they abound with too much wit; and that the orator has, on certain occaſions, been induc'd to exert this quality after a manner which was not altogether ſo conſiſtent with the gravity of the preacher.

Yet becauſe there are perſons who will be very difficultly perſuaded, that it is a crime for any man to have wit, or to ſhew it on any occaſion, I ſhall endeavour to confirm what I ſay by inſtancing in two books, both of them full of juſt and excellent arguments, and compos'd much upon the ſame ſubject: I mean, *The decay of chriſtian piety*; and, *The cauſes of the preſent corruption of Chriſtians.* In the former, there are a great many important truths propos'd and prov'd after a manner that is very juſt and ſolid. There are alſo in condeſcenſion to the taſte of the age, wherein that work was compos'd, a great many beautiful turns of wit, and elegancies of expreſſion. In ſhort, the author ſeems to have accomodated his way of writing both to the judgment and imagination of his readers. In the latter of theſe books, the ſtyle is plain and ſimple, but withal, the reaſoning ſo ſtrong, lively, and penetrating, that he muſt be perfectly inſenſible to the greateſt beauties of human compoſition, who is not affected in a very moving and high degree with it.

Yet I am ſenſible young divines, whoſe benefit I more particularly intend, are apt to admire that talent which I have been contending againſt the uſe of, in diſcourſes on religious ſubjects; for that reaſon I have the rather enlarg'd on this topick. I would prevent the gradual advances of time and experience, towards correcting their fondneſs for outward pomp and gaiety; and be inſtrumental, if I could, towards turning their thoughts upon juſt and ſolid reaſoning: Not but that in reſpect to their age, they may be now and then allow'd to adorn themſelves with ſome flowers, provided they be ſeaſonable and well choſen. But ſtrong, clear, and, where the nature of the ſubject admits it, plain reaſoning, is adapted to the taſte of all ages, and what will always pleaſe. The author of, *The whole duty of man,* excels in theſe three characters; and 'tis owing to them, that the learned and the illiterate, the weak and the wiſe, are in common affected with that admirable book, and do ſo indifferently concur in making the ſame judgment of it.

III. I am in the next place to account, as well as I am able, for the motives, which induc'd me to engage in ſo great and difficult an undertaking.

1. I have a right to expect, if not from the principles of common ingenuity, at leaſt from thoſe of chriſtian charity, that my readers will ſuppoſe the following work, however executed, yet to have been form'd upon good, and pious conſiderations. And tho' no perſon is ſo apprehenſive, as my ſelf, of my being unequal to it; yet as there is not any work, that I know of in our language, wherein the principles of natural and reveal'd religion are clearly and particularly ſtated in the full extent of them, I thought it might be more eligible to contribute my weak endeavours to this end, than that it ſhould be wholly unattempted. Why ſhould our young divines be ſo much oblig'd to form themſelves upon foreign ſyſtems? Wherein there is yet reaſon to ſuppoſe they frequently lay the foundation of their theological ſtudies, and from which it is therefore natural to them even to borrow ſupplies of matter for their ſermons. The character we bear every where for ſolid and rational divinity, ſeems to render it the more reproachful to us, that we ſhould draw ſo much on our friends abroad. And tho' I cannot flatter my ſelf that I ſhall be able to remove that reproach, yet I ſhall make an eſſay towards re-

moving it, commendable at leaſt in itſelf, and which may poſſibly one time or other put ſome perſon better qualify'd upon a more ſucceſsful attempt.

2. I was the more willing to engage in this great deſign, on account of the incapacity of diſcharging my miniſterial function, in ſome of the moſt important duties of it, which it has pleas'd the divine providence for ſome years to put me under: I could not anſwer to my ſelf, under all the diſcouragements I have met with, the charge of being perfectly idle; and that favourable reception, wherewith the publick has been pleas'd to entertain the other works I have publiſh'd, gave me ſome grounds to hope, that *my labour*, even in this great work, might *not be* altogether *in vain in the Lord*.

3. Theſe conſiderations, I own, had the greater force towards animating my endeavours, upon my having the honour to obſerve, that ſo great a number of the brighteſt and moſt eminent characters in the church and civil life, were pleas'd to countenance and encourage them.

But allowing thoſe, I have mention'd, as the principal motives to my engaging in ſo great a work, to have ſomething reaſonable in them; it will ſtill perhaps be queſtion'd, whether there were not certain conſiderations to diſſuade me from it, more than ſufficient to out-balance thoſe motives. It may not therefore be improper to ſay ſomething here, in anſwer to the animadverſions upon this undertaking, which I have occaſionally met with. And,

1. The incapacity of any one perſon for ſo great a work has been, more than once, objected to me. If this objection be well founded in general, I readily acknowledge, there is no perſon,

whom it can more affect in particular. But why ſhould a work of this nature appear ſo impracticable by one perſon? It cannot be ſo from the nature of it; to ſay this, would be in effect to inſinuate, that the proofs of the ſeveral articles of religion are too difficult to be clearly made out, except in the way of combination; which is to bring a charge, not ſo much againſt any particular perſon, who endeavours to make them out, as againſt religion itſelf, and ſeems more proper to be urg'd by an atheiſt, or a deiſt, than a chriſtian; as implying, that there is ſomething in chriſtianity, ſo unintelligible or obſcure, that no one chriſtian is capable of giving a reaſonable and ſuccinct account of them.

If it be ſaid, that a work of this nature is too long, for any one to think of accompliſhing: This again ſeems to reflect on the wiſdom of God in the revelation he has made to us, as if it would require more than a reaſonable portion of the age of man, to inſtruct people in the principles, and duties of it.

Had it been my deſign to collect all that has been ſaid by the fathers, the ſchoolmen, and commentators upon the ſeveral heads of divinity, this had been a work of a vaſt compaſs indeed; but when I only propos'd to argue in a rational manner, concerning things neceſſary to be believ'd and done, as deducible from the light of reaſon, and the authority of divine revelation, without deſcending to queſtions of more ſubtilty than uſe, why ſhould an attempt of this nature, how formidable ſoever in the firſt deſign of it, yet be thought altogether impracticable?

So far as I am affected in particular with this objection, I ought, were I more capable of anſwering it, to be wholly ſilent. It is enough for a writer to make a private judgment of his own defects; thoſe, who can diſcover more of them in the work I here publiſh, than my ſelf, muſt do me the honour to examine it with greater attention than I can in decency expect they ſhould.

2. It has been farther objected to me, that upon the ſeveral heads, I have propos'd to treat of, there are already very excellent treatiſes in our own language. I was a little ſurpriz'd at an objection, which, if it proves any thing, proves too much. We have ſermons upon moſt of the doctrinal and practical texts of ſcripture, and many upon the hiſtorical; therefore no more ſermons ought to be compos'd; the old will ſerve as well, and perhaps, on ſeveral occaſions, better. The foundation of this reaſoning is alſo probably falſe. It may be queſtion'd, whether we have any work ſo complete, but what in one reſpect or other, will admit of improvement. One of the moſt perfect and valuable works of its kind, is that of biſhop *Pearſon* on the creed; yet he who conſults it upon the ſubject of God's omnipotence, will be far from finding this attribute treated of after ſuch a manner, that there is nothing wanting to give us a more perfect idea of it, or to ſatisfy all the difficulties which may ariſe in our minds concerning it.

It may be farther conſider'd, that unbelievers are continually renewing their attacks againſt the principles, and libertines againſt the morals of the Goſpel. This is one good reaſon, were there no other, why we, eſpecially to whom the word of reconciliation is committed, ſhould ſtill appear in the defence of ſacred truths, by taking into conſideration whatever is advanc'd anew, with any appearance of argument againſt them, that ſo the advocates, whether of infidelity or corruption, inſtead of pretending an occaſion of triumph from our ſilence, may, by the bleſſing of God upon our repeated endeavours, be put to ſilence themſelves, and at length brought to the *acknowledgment of the truth, that they may be ſav'd.*

3. Another charge has been brought againſt me, to which I am very willing to allow all the force, whereof it may be thought capable. It has been repreſented to me, even by ſeveral of thoſe, who have been pleaſed to favour my deſign, that however practicable it might be, yet I had confin'd my ſelf to too ſhort a compaſs of time for the execution of it. As I deſire upon all occaſions to ſubmit to reaſon, I have taken a farther ſpace for the publication of my firſt volume, than I propos'd and intended. I hope my ſubſcribers will not be too much offended on account of my diſappointing them in an expectation, that I ought not indeed to have given; but which it had been perhaps more culpable in me to have anſwer'd, by precipitating ſo great and important a work.

4. It is neceſſary that I ſhould in particular take notice of one objection againſt the ſcheme itſelf, upon which I had propos'd to form my firſt volume. It was ſaid, that if I ſhould proceed in every point according to the method laid down in my Propoſals, there would be a neceſſity of my making ſeveral repetitions, that might perhaps prove no leſs diſtaſtful to the reader, than inconvenient to my ſelf. This conſideration appear'd to have ſo great weight, that having treated in the other parts of my work, concerning the ſeveral ſubjects, upon which the

articles of the church of *England* are drawn up, I thought proper to leave the fifth general head, as I had propos'd it, out of the firſt volume.

There is yet one particular, which to ſatisfy an expectation, my readers may probably entertain, I think my ſelf obliged to ſay ſomething to. It will be natural enough for them to conclude, that I did not engage in ſo great an undertaking, without conſulting ſome perſons of diſtinction in the learned world, whoſe advice might be moſt neceſſary towards directing me in the conduct of it.

I readily embrace this occaſion of acknowledging the honour done me, by certain eminent fathers of our church, upon my laying this deſign, with the heads, upon which I had propos'd to purſue it, before them. And tho' I had not their inſtructions, in ſo full and particular a manner, as might have render'd my work more perfect, yet what they were pleaſed to ſay to me in general, has not, I hope, been without its proper influence and uſe.

The firſt of them I ſhall preſume to name, is the moſt reverend father in God, the Lord Archbiſhop of *Tork*. Upon my acquainting his Grace, that I had form'd a ſcheme of ſo great an undertaking, he was pleas'd to impart his thoughts of it to me with that candour, and to treat me with that condeſcending goodneſs, which he is, in ſo eminent a manner, known, on all occaſions, to exemplify; animating at the ſame time my endeavours with thoſe ſentiments of piety, which might have become the character he bears, in the firſt and pureſt ages of the church.

I had the honour of ſome private converſation with the Biſhop of *Rocheſter* on the ſame ſubject; who has all the great talents, from which proper directions may be expected in any part, whether of theological, or of human and polite learning.

The fine and exact method of reaſoning, with a juſtneſs and perſpecuity of expreſſion, which diſtinguiſh the writings of Biſhop *Gaſtrell*, diſcover how fit a perſon he was to be addreſs'd to, upon the ſame occaſion.

I need not ſay any thing, concerning the reaſons of my application to Biſhop *Potter*, who, beſides his conſummate knowledge of the language, wherein we are principally to ſeek for the great truths and records of our holy religion, and his known qualifications in general as a divine, does at preſent ſuſtain a peculiar charge in reference to that character, and fills the divinity chair, in the moſt famous and learned univerſity of *Oxford*, with ſo juſt and univerſal applauſe.

The Biſhop of *Bath* and *Wells* has not only been pleas'd to encourage my deſign, but to adviſe the proſecution of it, in terms, ſo very favourable to me, that I ſhould not be excus'd for mentioning them. His exemplary piety and goodneſs, with a primitive, ſhall I call it, or apoſtolical manner, the ſimplicity whereof ſo viſibly tends to preſerve the dignity of his order, never fail to excite in all thoſe, who know him, a ſtrong idea of veneration, even without their attending to his other qualifications of learning, charity, and an unbyaſs'd integrity.

It is with particular ſatisfaction, that among the perſons to whom the ſcheme of this work was firſt communicated, I here mention the Deans of *Ely* and *Chicheſter*, whom I had a proper opportunity indeed of mentioning before, when I was ſpeaking in terms, which may perhaps be thought too general and free, concerning our modern diſcourſes from the pulpit. I could not have produc'd two brighter, or more proper inſtances againſt what was obſerv'd on that head; tho' I was far from deſigning to inſinuate, as if we had not at preſent a conſiderable number of as eminent and able preachers, as have at any time diſtinguiſh'd themſelves in this church.

But the right reverend perſon to whoſe inſtructions I am in the higheſt meaſure indebted, is the preſent Biſhop of *Briſtol*, who did not only condeſcend to read over ſome part of my work, but to obſerve certain errors and miſtakes, which had eſcap'd me in it. Had his leiſure permitted what his ſingular humanity diſpos'd him to, a greater part of it would probably have been recommended by his Lordſhip's peruſal; and if the expreſſion be not too arrogant, by his corrections.

What aſſiſtance I owe to any perſon in the compoſition will be acknowledg'd, as I ſhall have occaſion to mention the articles upon which I receiv'd it. And tho' I am far from ſatisfying my ſelf with a general acknowledgment to many perſons of diſtinction, who have been pleas'd after a more liberal manner to encourage my ſtudies on the preſent occaſion, yet I ought not perhaps in the opinion of my reader, to detain him with particulars, wherein I am perſonally concern'd, and which have no neceſſary relation to the work before him.

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Part I.

Of the Exiſtence of GOD.

Chap. I.

Whether the exiſtence of God ought to be prov'd, or can be prov'd from the principles of natural reaſon?

BEFORE I proceed to ſhew by any formal and direct proofs that there is a God, it may be proper to enquire whether this be not a principle, that, inſtead of requiring any proof at all, ſhould rather be ſuppos'd, and taken abſolutely for granted. For if the idea of God be naturally imprinted on the minds of men, it will be thought needleſs to prove his exiſtence, tho' ſuch other Arguments could be produc'd for it, as might carry with them the cleareſt evidence of demonſtration: Or if the method of proving his exiſtence, inſtead of ſatisfying the objections of atheiſtical men againſt it, or confirming the faith of believers, ſhould only tend to render this fundamental article of religion more precarious or doubtful, then indeed we ought not to attempt any proof of it, out of pure regard to the intereſts of religion, and the peace and tranquillity of thoſe, who already profeſs it. Or again, if, according to *Socinus*, tho' in this point the moſt celebrated of his followers have diſſented from him, we can have no good or ſolid proof that God exiſts, but from divine revelation, it will be altogether in vain for us to employ any argument in proof of his exiſtence, which may be drawn from the principles of natural reaſon; we ſhall then have nothing to do in order to evince this grand truth, but to prove in general the truth and divinity of the holy Scriptures.

THAT I may not therefore undertake a work, either altogether unneceſſary, or on any account prejudicial to the ends of religion, or in the nature of it impracticable, I ſhall previouſly examine the force of theſe ſeveral arguments, which are brought to diſſuade us from entring upon the formal proofs of a Deity, either from the principles of reveal'd religion, or from ſuch conſiderations, as the natural light of our minds may afford. And,

Firſt, WHETHER the idea of God be naturally imprinted on the minds of men, is a queſtion, I ſhall afterwards have occaſion diſtinctly to conſider: but taking it at preſent for granted, no reaſon appears why we ought not therefore to inſiſt on this, or any other proof, which is uſually urg'd for the exiſtence of God; ſince thoſe, who contend for ſuch a natural impreſſion, muſt either be oblig'd to aſſert, that the perſons who deny it, oppoſe a moſt evident truth, and whereof they are at the ſame time ſelf-conſcious; which is to charge, if I miſtake not, the far greater number of good and learned men with an inſincerity, to ſay no worſe, whereof they ought not to be ſuppos'd capable; or elſe it muſt be acknowledg'd, that the idea of God, tho' naturally impreſs'd, does not diſcover itſelf with equal clearneſs to all men at all times; and if this be admitted, as in reſpect to the common probity of men we cannot but admit it, then it will be a reaſonable inference, that the idea of God, with what force ſoever originally impreſs'd, yet through want of education, from groſs ignorance, or a long corruption of manners, may be in great meaſure defac'd; or the minds of men may be ſo wholly taken up with worldly affairs and amuſements, that they will ſeldom or never find proper intervals of attending diſtinctly to it.

IT is neceſſary therefore, ſuppoſing men to have an innate idea of God, that this idea ſhould be ſometimes awaken'd in them; and that they ſhould be made to feel the impreſſion and evidence of it, in a more powerful manner; as we cauſe ignorant and heedleſs perſons to take notice of the beauties of a building, or a ſtatue, which they would otherwiſe paſs by without making the leaſt obſervation upon them.

AND what method can be more uſeful to awaken this idea of God in the minds of men, and to excite afreſh the perception of it, than by propounding to them ſuch collateral proofs of his exiſtence, which ſhew, that tho' no idea of him had been originally imprinted, yet he has not left himſelf without a witneſs in the common and obvious deductions of reaſon. Thus all our other ideas are naturally excited in the mind by ſuch things, as bear the moſt lively and ſtrong reſemblance to them, or wherewith they have ſome proper and viſible connection.

WE are not, at all times, actually conſcious of the impreſſions, which have been formerly made on our minds by the moſt moving and affecting objects; but when any ſentiments occur to our thoughts of affinity with thoſe objects, the little cells in the brain, wherein the images of them were repoſited, open, as it were, of their own accord, and we become anew ſenſible to their force and activity. We may ſuppoſe, in like manner, that if there be really any natural character of God in the ſoul of man, it was originally ſo impreſs'd, that it ſhould not unfold itſelf but by degrees, at certain times, and upon certain conditions, or the intervention of proper occaſional cauſes.

Secondly, As to what may be objected from the effect, which the common methods of proving a Deity are ſometimes obſerv'd to have on the minds of atheiſtical men, who, inſtead of being convinc'd thereby, pretend, that their difficulties remain ſtill unaccounted for; or that perhaps they even find freſh matter, whereupon to queſtion the exiſtence of God, from the weakneſs or intricacy of thoſe arguments, which writers produce for it: We anſwer, that this effect is only accidental, and that if there be any force in what is precariouſly objected on occaſion of it, men muſt reſolve not to write at all, nor upon any ſubject; ſeeing the ſtrongeſt and the cleareſt arguments do not irreſiſtibly operate conviction, but require ſome previous diſpoſitions, ſome ſtrength and liberty of mind in thoſe, to whom they are propounded. The fault therefore may be, not in the writings of thoſe, who aſſert the exiſtence of a Deity, in the beſt manner they are able; but in the prepoſſeſſion of their readers, or their want of capacity and attention.

But let us ſuppoſe, what ought not to be granted, that the error of the atheiſt lies wholly in his underſtanding, and that he is ready to open his eyes to the light of truth, and to follow it, whenever 'tis clearly preſented before him; but that, conſulting ſome books, which treat on the exiſtence of God, he does not find the arguments for it in the method they are propos'd, of ſuch weight or perſpicuity, that any reaſonable and inquiſitive perſon can be perſuaded to acquieſce entirely in them; yet ſtill we ſay this objection is rather perſonal, and owing to what happens in ſome particular caſes, than founded in the reaſon of the thing againſt which it is brought. For it does not in the leaſt affect the cauſe of theiſm, or the reaſonableneſs of appearing in defence of it; but only the manner wherein it is ſometimes by accident not ſo well proſecuted or defended, as might have been expected.

It muſt be granted indeed, that all perſons who have undertaken to prove the exiſtence of God, and to expoſe the folly and unreaſonableneſs of atheiſm, have not equally ſucceeded; and that even ſome of thoſe, who have had in common opinion the greateſt ſucceſs, yet are complained of as not being altogether ſo clear and intelligible in certain material points, as the importance of them ſeem'd to require. This defect might in great meaſure proceed from the nature of their proofs, and would eaſily be accounted for, if only illiterate perſons, or ſuch as never accuſtom'd themſelves to abſtract reaſoning, had taken notice of it; who being unacquainetd with the terms, wherein metaphyſical truths are propos'd, muſt neceſſarily find themſelves perplex'd with very obſcure ideas of ſuch truths: Yet where men write for the learned, or thoſe who have already acquir'd ſome competent force of mind, one would think, that in a ſtrong and ſignificant language, they might eaſily render thoſe proofs, how metaphyſical ſoever, clear and intelligible to others, which are really ſo to themſelves. Demonſtrations eſpecially, where they are pretended to, ſhould be ſet in the moſt full and obvious light: As in the nature of them they are ſuppos'd to ariſe, and in the conſtruction of them to proceed, upon the moſt inconteſted and diſtinct principles: So that if the complaint be true, that ſome of the moſt learned and celebrated treatiſes, on the ſubject I am conſidering, are in certain articles of the higheſt conſequence very obſcure and difficultly underſtood, even by thoſe who do not want a common capacity: It were to be wiſh'd, that the authors had taken greater care to expreſs themſelves in a more perſpicuous, and intelligible manner.

It muſt be granted however, that the books which have been writ in proof of a Deity, and againſt atheiſts, have been in general attended with very good and wholſome effects; and that atheiſm was never more aſhamed to ſhew itſelf in any learned or philoſophical age, than in the preſent. If ſome perſons, more atheſtically inclin'd, have taken occaſion from any books to pretend, that inſtead of conviction, they have rather diſcover'd in them farther reaſons of their incredulity; this, we ſay, is either a general charge ariſing from prejudice, and without proof, which may therefore with equal reaſon be deny'd; or if it could be prov'd, it only, as we obſerv'd before, affects particular authors, and in particular inſtances, which none therefore, but the authors themſelves, are concern'd to give an anſwer to.

But the great difficulty lies in the other branch of this objection, which concerns honeſt and well-meaning, tho' ignorant perſons, who, without meditating on the proofs of a God, implicitly embrace, and profeſs the belief of him: And why ſhould we to no end diſturb the peace and repoſe of illiterate people with a long pompous train of arguments, and eſpecially with curious, and nice ſpeculations? Were it not better to let them go on in the perſuaſion wherein they are already ſettled, and which perhaps they never queſtion'd the truth of, than to amuſe them with unneceſſary enquiries, or, it may be, to ſtart up difficulties in their way, which they are not able to ſolve themſelves, nor diſtinctly to perceive our ſolutions of?

For theſe, or the like reaſons, ſome have thought, that it were more adviſeable for divines, not to argue to the people either concerning the exiſtence of God, or other general truths of religion, which they are preſuppos'd to yield their aſſent to, as firſt and undeniable principles.

It will appear, notwithſtanding, that the advantage of inſiſting ſometimes on the proof of a Deity (and the reaſon holds with reſpect to all other fundamental articles of religion) is much greater than the accidental inconveniences, that are here objected againſt the uſe of ſuch arguments. For,

1. An implicit faith, which it is thought the people ſhould rather be left blindly to the conduct of, than have the grounds into which it may be reſolv'd, particularly explain'd to them, cannot be preſum'd in caſes of very great and violent temptations, to lay any effectual reſtraints upon them. Men are not ordinarily willing to quit a certain and important intereſt, for the ſake of an uncertain principle or proſpect; both of which may at leaſt be uncertain, for any thing they know to the contrary. Beſides, it does not ſeem reaſonable in the nature of the thing, that any perſon ſhould expoſe himſelf to the greateſt difficulties and dangers in defence of a perſuaſion, for which he can give no reaſon, how true ſoever ſuch a perſuaſion may be in itſelf.

2. The belief of a God is not at all times equally lively and ſtrong in all perſons, nor perhaps in any perſon. According to the degrees of evidence, which we have for any truth, our aſſent to it will be in proportion fortify'd: and conſequently ſuch a truth muſt be leſs evident to thoſe who have ſeldom or never conſider'd the grounds of it, than to thoſe who have examin'd them with the ſtricteſt application, and in a clear and diſtinct view; yet even ſuch perſons will find it of great advantage to be ſometimes ſtirr'd up by being put in remembrance of what they already know. If the wiſeſt and beſt of men will impartially examine themſelves, when they have fallen into any great error or diſorder, they may obſerve that it was not ſo much for want of good principles ſubſiſting, tho' latent, in them, as from inadvertency, and their not allowing themſelves time to make proper reflections upon them, or to purſue them in their natural and direct conſequences.

And if this be the caſe of perſons, who have meditated moſt on the fundamental truths of religion, and moſt clearly diſcover'd the grounds of them, what ſhall we expect from thoſe, who have only a general and confus'd notion of God and religion? Or what impieties may they not be in danger of committing, were it not our duty on proper occaſions to confirm their belief, by inſtructing them in the particular reaſons of it, and to the end it may operate in them with a due and genuine force?

It is not then from an opinion of the ſtrength of thoſe arguments, whereby atheiſm is ſupported, that divines ſet themſelves formally to confute it, and prove the exiſtence of God; but becauſe 'tis neceſſary, that thoſe, who already believe in him, ſhould ſometimes by proper arguments, whereby they may be differently affected, according to the different manner of propounding them, have their belief more effectually confirm'd, and be made more attentive to the force and evidence of it. As to the confutation of atheiſts, it ought perhaps to be no farther deſign'd than as ſubſervient indirectly to theſe ends: Seeing it may be a proper queſtion, whether there be really a ſpeculative atheiſt in the world; or who profeſſes atheiſm on any other motive, than that of gratifying an affectation of falſe glory, or ſome ſtrong prejudice againſt thoſe who profeſs religion, or, laſtly, of a certain rage, to which an ambition of being thought ſuperior to the reſt of mankind, ſubjects thoſe, who are under the power of it: But which may ſtill be ſuppos'd to act with greater force on a ſoul, which the Spirit of God has abandon'd.

3. The ſcriptures themſelves reaſon upon natural principles in proof of a God, and conſequently ſuppoſe, that ſuch principles being reaſonable in their own nature, may, and ought to be employ'd

ploy'd by us as ſuch. A text or two to this purpoſe, which I ſhall preſently have occaſion to recite, are ſtrictly argumentative, from the ſtructure and viſible beauties of the world. The fathers in the firſt ages, when religion was in the greateſt ſimplicity, particularly inſiſted on this argument, and diſplay'd their eloquence in the amplification of it: And indeed it muſt be own'd, that this is an argument moſt obvious and level to common apprehenſions, as well as moſt affecting to mankind in general.

Here we are ſupply'd with an anſwer, to what has been inſinuated, that the common proofs of a Deity may be apt to raiſe doubts and ſcruples in the minds of illiterate perſons, on occaſion of the difficulties ariſing from their being unable to comprehend them. This objection, I ſay, cannot be of the leaſt force, where we reaſon to the people from the nature of efficient or final cauſes. A man needs no great capacity to be made ſenſible, that this world muſt have had a beginning, that it could not form itſelf into the ſtate and order, wherein we now behold it; and therefore muſt owe its original, and the many admirable ends and uſes, for which the ſeveral parts of it are no leſs admirably contriv'd, to ſome moſt wiſe and powerful and beneficent being. And it was but reaſonable, as all men without diſtinction were concern'd, to believe the exiſtence of ſuch a being, that their belief ſhould depend on a ſimple proof, and the moſt eaſy and obvious to every man. As to other proofs of an abſtract nature, which may be very uſefully employ'd, thoſe who apprehend themſelves in any danger of being thereby perplex'd or embarraſs'd, are under leſs obligation to conſider them.

Thirdly, Neither are the objections of *Socinus* againſt our employing the natural proofs of a Deity of any more weight. As to his opinion that ſuch proofs are not ſolid or concluſive, this depends upon the nature and conſtruction of them, to which we muſt therefore refer, and whereby his opinion is to be try'd. But the explication he gives of certain texts of Scripture to juſtify what he aſſerts, ought to be more diſtinctly examin'd; and the rather, becauſe he has in particular endeavour'd to wreſt one or two of theſe very texts from us, which have been all along underſtood to refer us to the viſible works of God, for a proof of his exiſtence. The words of the Apoſtle * have been conſtantly cited to this purpoſe. *For the inviſible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead:* Which words, according to *Socinus*, are to be interpreted after this manner. "The

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* *Rom.* i. 20.

“ ſecret deſigns of God's providence towards his church from the “ time he created the world, are now clearly diſcover'd by the “ miraculous works of holy and inſpir'd men, eſpecially of *Jeſus* “ Chriſt and his Apoſtles: Hereby we come even to the know- “ ledge of his decrees, and the certain accompliſhment of his “ promiſes *. But, beſides that this interpretation is a force put upon the moſt natural and obvious ſenſe of the words, it appears from the context to be in itſelf manifeſtly falſe. For the Apoſtle is not here ſpeaking concerning the members of the jewiſh or chriſtian church in particular, but concerning mankind in general, yet with a more immediate regard to ſuch of them as made philoſophy their profeſſion; who, as he argues in the words directly following, were *without excuſe*, *becauſe that when they knew God*, from the ſenſible effects of his power and providence, in the frame and order of his works, *they glorify'd him not as God*, *but profeſſing themſelves wiſe*, *they became fools.* If it be ſaid, that they knew God by a conſtant and uninterrupted tradition, tranſmitted from one generation to another, of that original diſcovery which God firſt made of himſelf to *Adam*; we ask, how this tradition, if the truth it convey'd had not likewiſe been viſibly founded in the natural reaſon of things, came to be preſerv'd ſo uncorrupt and intire, through ſo long a tract of time, and to ſo many different nations. The way of communicating knowledge in any kind, by word of mouth to ſucceſſive ages, is very uncertain and precarious, even where the greateſt care is requir'd, and ſhould be taken, to perpetuate the ſubject of it in the minds of men. We have a remarkable inſtance to this purpoſe, in what happen'd to the *Jews* during the time of their ſojourning in *Ægypt*, when *Moſes* was commanded by God to go and acquaint them with his gracious intention of effecting their deliverance from the miſerable ſervitude, under which they were reduc'd. This prince made a difficulty of the meſſage, and *ſaid unto God*, *Behold when I come unto the children of Iſrael, and ſhall ſay unto them, the God of your fathers hath ſent me unto you; and they ſhall ſay to me, what is his name? What ſhall I ſay unto them?* Exod. 3. 13. It is not indeed evident from hence, that no general notion of a God was ſtill preſerv'd by that people, but only that they had forgotten by what particular name the God of *Iſrael* was formerly pleas'd to diſtinguiſh himſelf. Yet were it not that the belief of a God flow'd from the natural light of their minds, there is much greater cauſe to think, that a tradition, which only concern'd them in common with the reſt of mankind, would ſooner have been loſt among them, than a tradition of the noble works which God had done in the days of their fathers, and the promiſes he had made to themſelves, as a choſen and peculiar people.

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* The criticiſm of *Socinus*, and upon which he principally founds this explication of the text, is not juſt: He obſerves, that the Apoſtle according to the faith, of all the *Greek* copies, does not ſay ἐκ κτίσεως, but ἀπὸ κτίσεως; and he argues, that this prepoſition ἀπὸ is not properly us'd, when we would expreſs any thing, as a means of knowledge or information, but rather as a mark of time, from which we are to compute. But to ſhew this is a falſe criticiſm, we need only conſult the following paſſages. *Mat*. 7. 16, 20. ——24. 32. *Heb*. 5. 8.

But ſhould we grant that the philoſophers knew God by tradition, it will not therefore follow that they had no other means of knowing him; all we can infer from this conceſſion is, that we may come to the knowledge of things by different means, and that God, when he ſees fit, may confirm any natural truth, by a divine authority; which irreſiſtibly perſuades, and ſilences all diſputes.

I ſhall but take notice of one paſſage more, which *Socinus* has endeavour'd to pervert the common ſenſe and uſe of. It is that of the pſalmiſt, ‡ *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament ſheweth his handy-work.* He ſuppoſes, there is no more intended by theſe words, than that thoſe who already believe a God, diſcover the glorious effects of his power and wiſdom, in the ſtructure and motion of the heavenly bodies. And tho' he cites certain * authorities to ſupport this interpretation; yet in effect, and by clear conſequence, he juſtifies the interpretation commonly receiv'd. For whatever expreſſes the glory of God, except we could conceive his glory to ſubſiſt ſeparately from his being, or without a ſubject, muſt neceſſarily lead us to the knowledge of his being: And whatever diſcovers his handy-work, by direct implication diſcovers him to be the author of it, without any neceſſity of a previous revelation from himſelf, that he is ſo. And therefore it may be queſtion'd, whether God ever made any expreſs revelation to mankind concerning his exiſtence. The texts of ſcripture which would moſt probably be cited to this end, do not ſo much declare his being in an abſolute ſenſe, as the nature, the unity, and other attributes of it. But that the pſalmiſt is not here ſpeaking to the *Jews*, who had the benefit of a divine and ſtanding revelation, excluſive to the nations of the earth in general, appears from the ſequel of his argument, where he ſhews that this voice of nature, which declares the glory of God, is equally intelligible to all mankind; that there is *no ſpeech* or *language, where it is not heard*; that it extends itſelf *through all the earth*, and *to the ends of the world* †.

There are other texts, wherewith *Socinus* more directly attacks thoſe, who are of opinion, that the being of a God may be ſolidly prov'd from natural reaſon. From the example of *Enoch*, who pleas'd God, and the impoſſibility of pleaſing him without faith, and the neceſſity of believing that he is, by thoſe who come unto him †, he forms this concluſion, that the notion of a God could not, as is here ſuppos'd, be of faith, if at the ſame time it were natural to men, or could be clearly deduc'd from any natural proofs. But this is an argument, as *Logicians* term it, of imperfect enumeration. For why may not a different medium be employ'd to prove the ſame truth; or why ſhould faith, which may in general ſignify our aſſent to any truth deducible either from the principles of reaſon, or the teſtimony of divine revelation, be here reſolv'd into the authority of divine revelation only.

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‡ *Pſal.* 19. 1.

* *Joh. Campenſis*, G. *Buchanan*, *Zuinglius*.

† *Pſal.* 19. 3, 4.

His reaſon why all faith muſt ſolely repoſe on divine authority, becauſe, as the Apoſtle aſſerts, *faith comes by hearing* ‡, is equally inconcluſive. Faith in this place having wholly ſuch doctrines or facts for its object, as were reported from heaven, and which we acknowledge, could not have been otherwiſe known, or aſſented to.

It may afford matter of ſpeculation, by the way, that this famous head of a ſect denominated from him, who, in other articles, wherein human reaſon is not altogether ſo competent a judge, has advanc'd the power and prerogative of it ſo high, ſhould yet in a caſe upon which it has ſo clear a right to judge, have endeavour'd to depreſs it ſo low, as to render it wholly inſignificant.

There is one reaſon, ſtill in reſerve, why it may be neceſſary, for divines eſpecially, to inſiſt on the particular proofs of a Deity, even in regard to pious and well diſpos'd perſons, and whoſe faith in him is already eſtabliſh'd on good grounds. The arguments whereby we prove the exiſtence of God at the ſame time they are proper to ſtrengthen and animate our faith, have a direct tendency to give us the moſt ſublime ideas of him, and the moſt ardent and pious motions towards him. They at once affect our minds with ſuch a profound admiration, and penetrate our hearts with ſo inflam'd a love, as cannot fail of influencing our practice, and exciting in us ſtill ſtronger and ſtronger deſires of uniting our ſelves after a more perfect and intimate manner to him.

In a word, there is ſomething, in the contemplation of this infinitely perfect being, ſo great and tranſporting, as muſt neceſſarily, if we be not altogether inſenſible, inſpire us with the moſt exalted ſtrains of devotion, and make us break out into theſe, or the like paſſionate expoſtulations of holy *David*; *My ſoul is athirſt for God, for the living God—whom have I in heaven but thee?*

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† *Heb.* 6. 7. ‡ *Rom.* 10. 6.

And there is none upon earth, that I deſire in compariſon of thee? —O ſend out thy light and thy truth, let them lead me; let them bring me unto his holy hill—My meditation of him ſhall be ſweet; I will be glad in the Lord.

And indeed it is but reaſonable in the nature of the thing, that the contemplation of the greateſt and moſt perfect object, ſhould be attended with the moſt ſtrong, the moſt lively, and grateful ſenſations.

Chap. II.

The firſt proof of a God deduc'd from the following propoſitions.

I. There is ſomething which exiſts.
II. Something has exiſted eternally.
III. Something has been eternally ſelf-exiſtent.
IV. What is ſelf-exiſtent, muſt have all the perfections that any where exiſt, or in any ſubject.
V. What is ſelf-exiſtent, muſt have all poſſible perfections, and every perfection in an infinite meaſure.
VI. What has all poſſible perfection, and every perfection in an infinite meaſure, is God.

If I can ſhew, that theſe propoſitions are founded on certain and evident truth, and that there is a neceſſary connection between them, the inference I would draw from them, is clear and undeniable.

I. There is ſomething which exiſts. This is a principle founded on the ſtrongeſt evidence we can have for any thing, that of ſelf-conſciouſneſs, to ſay nothing concerning the evidence we have of things exiſting without us. I ſhall be thought wrong perhaps in aſſerting, what the moſt ſceptical perſon will not deny, and what the very denyal of would, by neceſſary implication, confirm. But we cannot proceed, in the proof a Deity, upon too clear and inconteſtable grounds.

II. Something has exiſted eternally. This propoſition will admit of no diſpute: For if ſomething had not always exiſted, nothing could ever have exiſted. To ſuppoſe any being to begin to exiſt antecedently to all other beings, is to ſuppoſe it the cauſe of its own exiſtence, and by neceſſary conſequence to act before it is; but ſince there can be no operation either in order of time, or of human conception, previous to the ſubject of it, to ſay, a thing may act before it is, is in other words to ſay, that a thing may be, and may not be at the ſame time; than which, if we may judge according to our natural ideas of things, and we have no other way of judging, there cannot be a more expreſs and flaming contradiction.

III. SOMETHING has been eternally ſelf-exiſtent. That is, ſomething has eternally exiſted after ſuch a manner, that it did not owe its exiſtence to any previous cauſe either from within, or without itſelf. To ſuppoſe ſuch a cauſe from within, is to ſuppoſe a cauſe of the exiſtence of that, which exiſted already; to ſuppoſe ſuch a cauſe from without is equally abſurd, and would prove nothing, could it poſſibly be granted. For either upon ſuch a conceſſion we muſt be directed to ſome immediate cauſe, abſolutely ſelf-exiſtent, or elſe be led on, in a continued progreſſion, till we neceſſarily come at laſt to one cauſe or other, that is ſo, which is what we contend for; a cauſe without cauſe, either foreign, or, properly ſpeaking, internal, of its own exiſtence, and exiſting, by an abſolute neceſſity, whatever that be, of its own nature.

IV. WHAT is ſelf-exiſtent, muſt have all the perfections, that any where exiſt, or in any ſubject. Since nothing can ariſe out of nothing, and there can be no perfection, but what has ſome ſubject of inherence, every perfection muſt have been eternally ſome where or other, or in one ſubject or other, into which it muſt ultimately be reſolved; or elſe it could never have been at all, without admitting, what of all things we are the leaſt able to comprehend, an infinite progreſſion of efficient cauſes. Now the perfections attributed to the ſelf-exiſtent being, are either the modifications of his own ſubſtance, and then they reſide all of them formally in him, or elſe they are communicated in a leſs perfect manner to the creatures from him, and then they reſide, as the ſchools ſpeak, eminently in him; ſo that whatever perfection we obſerve in any being, muſt have been originally and eternally in the ſelf-exiſtent being.

V. WHAT is ſelf-exiſtent, muſt have all poſſible perfection, and every perfection in an infinite meaſure. It will be granted, perhaps, from what has been immediately ſaid before, that knowledge, wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, and whatever we annex the idea of perfection to, muſt have one ſubject or other to reſide in, to diſcover the original whereof, we muſt proceed by gradual ſteps, till we come at laſt to ſome ſelf-exiſtent being, the fountain of all perfection. But does it therefore follow, that the perfections we attribute to it, muſt be in the higheſt degree poſſible. Knowledge and wiſdom, ſtrength and goodneſs, are conſider'd as perfections in mankind, and men poſſeſs them in a very different meaſure; but thoſe, who ſhare them in the greateſt, do it after a moſt imperfect and limited manner. What neceſſity then is there hitherto of ſuppoſing, that the original cauſe of theſe perfections, improperly ſo term'd, wherever we can find it, ſhould poſſeſs them in ſo very high, and ſuperior a degree, above what we obſerve in the effect? Much leſs does there yet appear any neceſſity of his poſſeſſing them in an infinite degree. This is the difficulty I am now proceeding to conſider and account for, as well as I am able.

We have prov'd, that there is ſome being or other, which has been eternally ſelf-exiſtent; and therefore have diſcover'd one infinite attribute, at leaſt, of this ſelf-exiſtent being, that of eternity. We have prov'd farther, that knowledge and wiſdom, ſtrength and goodneſs, which we call perfections in men, muſt be found in equal degree at leaſt in ſome original and ſelf-exiſtent cauſe: So that we have not only diſcover'd a being, who was eternally ſelf-exiſtent, but who is intelligent and wiſe, powerful and good. The queſtion now is, whether from one infinite attribute, belonging to any ſubject, it will follow that all the other attributes of it muſt be too?

To this it is anſwer'd, that all properties eſſentially follow the nature and condition of their ſubject, and muſt be commenſurate to it. Thus extenſion, impenetrability and figure being properties of matter, all matter, ſo long as it continues ſuch, muſt be always, and in every part of it, neceſſarily extended, impenetrable and figur'd; nothing can be ſuppos'd to reſtrain or limit the properties neceſſarily reſulting from any ſubject, but the nature of the ſubject, from which they reſult.

For this reaſon we ſay, that wiſdom, power, and goodneſs, being properties of an infinite ſubject, or ſuch a ſubject, which is the ſubſtratum of one infinite perfection, all the other perfections belonging to it, muſt be alſo infinite. So that the ſame being, to whom we attribute infinite ſtability, if he be wiſe and powerful and good, which is now taken for granted, muſt be infinitely wiſe, powerful, and good: Otherways the ſame ſubject, conſider'd as a ſubject, would be infinite in one reſpect, and yet, at the ſame time, finite in another, which, if it be not a contradiction, ſeems to border ſo very near upon one, that we cannot comprehend the poſſibility of it.

But let us try, if we can, to diſcover, that 'tis no contradiction, and whether, after all, ſome reaſon may not be given, why the ſame ſelf-exiſtent ſubject, for ſo it is here conſider'd, ſhould be limited in one attribute or property, and yet not limited in another.

If any reaſon can be aſſign'd for ſuch a limitation, it muſt proceed from one or more of theſe grounds, either that a ſelf-exiſtent ſubject may limit itſelf, or may be limited by ſomething extrinſick to it; or elſe that the attribute ſo limited is incapable, from ſome abſolute impoſſibility in the nature of the thing, of any farther or higher degree of perfection. But,

1. A ſelf-exiſtent being, as the ſubject of any perfection, cannot limit itſelf, becauſe it muſt neceſſarily have exiſted, and from all eternity, what it is, and the ſame in all the properties eſſentially inherent in it, even antecedently to any act, or volition of its own.

2. Much leſs can ſuch a being be limited by any thing external to it; for beſides that ſelf-exiſtence neceſſarily implies independency, properties, which are eſſential to any ſubject, can admit of no encreaſe or diminution, or the leaſt imaginable change, without deſtroying the eſſence itſelf of ſuch a ſubject. Thus it being an eſſential property of matter to be extended or ſolid, diveſt it of its ſolidity or extenſion, and 'tis no longer matter, 'tis gone, 'tis annihilated, and we are not in the leaſt able to form any idea of it. There is not a more certain truth, than that the eſſential properties of all things, are immutably without limitation, or any variation whatever, the ſame, and can only be deſtroy'd with the eſſence of thoſe things themſelves, which they are ſeverally the properties of; but this argument, if it might admit clearer degrees of evidence, would hold ſtill the ſtronger, with reſpect to the eſſential properties of a being, eternally and neceſſarily ſelf-exiſtent.

3. There can be no abſolute impoſſibility in the nature of the thing, that the perfections inhering in an infinite ſubject, ſhould be in the higheſt, or even in an infinite degree. From whence can this impoſſibility ariſe? Not from the nature of the ſubject, to be ſure; which ſeems rather to infer the direct contrary, and that 'tis not only poſſible, that all the perfections in an infinite ſubject ſhould be infinite, but ſcarce poſſible to us, for the reaſons already mention'd, to conceive how it ſhould be otherways. Neither can this impoſſibility ariſe from the nature of the perfections themſelves; To ſay, that 'tis impoſſible for an infinite being to have all poſſible perfection, is a contradiction in terms; and to ſay, that 'tis impoſſible for an infinite ſubject to have the perfections inherent in it, to an infinite degree, or that there ſhould be a being infinitely wiſe, powerful, and good, is a contradiction to the common apprehenſions and ſentiments of mankind.

If the perfections then of a ſelf-exiſtent being, cannot be limited by itſelf, nor by any thing external to it, nor from any invincible repugnancy in the nature of ſuch perfections themſelves, I conclude, that the ſelf-exiſtent being, muſt not only have all poſſible perfection, but every perfection, in an infinite degree.

THIS argument, to ſhew the connection between the idea of a ſelf-exiſtent, and that of a moſt perfect being, or a being that has all perfection poſſible, may be propos'd after another manner. To ſay a thing is poſſible, is to ſay, that there is ſomething, ſome power or other capable of producing it. For nothing, or what has no power, can produce no effect. The power therefore which is to bring what is poſſible into being, is neceſſarily ſuppos'd already to exiſt. Otherways a perfection might ariſe out of Non-entity, or without a cauſe; and what we conceive poſſible, would be really impoſſible.

NOTHING can be reply'd to this, but that when we ſay, a thing is poſſible, we mean no more than that implies no contradiction or impoſſibility in the nature of the thing to exiſtence. But it does not therefore follow, that it actually exiſts, or ever will do ſo, as all perfections are ſuppos'd to do in God. It implies, for inſtance, no contradiction in the nature of the thing, that a tree ſhould grow up as high as the moon, or that a man ſhould perfectly underſtand all languages, with the hiſtory of all nations, and the genealogy of every family, whereof they are ſeverally compos'd. But we are not therefore to conclude, that there ever was, or ever will be, either a tree of ſo prodigious a height, or a man of ſo very wide and extenſive a knowledge.

To this we ſay the caſe is altogether different between a limited, and a ſelf-exiſtent being: A limited being may be capable of perfections which it has not, or of having thoſe it is already poſſeſs'd of, in a more eminent manner; ſo that in ſuch a being, the capacity indeed of certain poſſible perfections does not infer, that it actually poſſeſſes them, or in any conſiderable degree. But there being no power or capacity, but what muſt neceſſarily derive from the ſelf-exiſtent being, nothing can be more evident, than that it may virtually at leaſt contain every perfection in it; and how can any thing be ſuppos'd to want any perfection in its own power *?

IT muſt therefore be granted, that the idea of ſomething poſſible infers the exiſtence of ſomething to which it is poſſible, or elſe, which implies the greateſt impoſſibility of all, that we may

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* Biſhop *Gaſtrell* in his excellent diſcourſe concerning the certainty and neceſſity of religion in general, *p.* 46, 47. has given this argument all the force, whereof it ſeems capable; and propos'd it with that clearneſs and perſpecuity, which diſtinguiſh him in all his writings.

conceive a thing poſſible, for which we can conceive no poſſible foundation.

But perhaps you will ſay this conſequence is not juſt; a thing may not have an actual, and yet may have a poſſible foundation, upon which it is ſufficient to ground the idea of ſomething poſſible to it. But admitting this anſwer ſhould hold good, with reſpect to our having an idea of ſomething poſſible, upon a chimerical imagination of ſome ſubject to which it may be thought poſſible, tho' ſuch a ſubject does not really exiſt: As we may conceive it poſſible for *Peter* to go to *Rome*, in conſequence of our ſuppoſing there is ſuch a perſon as *Peter*, when really there is no ſuch perſon; yet, I ſay, this anſwer is altogether impertinent, when we ſpeak of a ſelf-exiſtent being, becauſe actual exiſtence is neceſſarily imply'd in the idea of ſuch a being; and indeed without the previous ſuppoſition of ſuch a being, nothing can be ſuppos'd to have had ſo much as a poſſibility of exiſting.

VI. What has all poſſible perfection, and every perfection in an infinite meaſure, is God. This propoſition needs no proof or illuſtration: For ſelf-exiſtence, and all poſſible perfection being the primary characters of God, and included in the common, and generally receiv'd notion of him, to what being ſoever we prove that theſe characters belong, we prove that ſame being to be God, from which the concluſion, that there is a God, does neceſſarily follow.

After all, it may perhaps be objected, that what I have ſaid in proof of a God, only proves that all perfections muſt have had their original in one being or other, and that from all eternity; but it does not prove, that ſeveral perfections could not have been deriv'd from ſeveral beings, which have exiſted eternally, or that they are any thing more than a complication of certain qualities reſulting from ſuch beings, which yet they had not really in themſelves, as by mixing a proper number of ingredients, we produce a compound, which has ſeveral virtues that were not ſeparately in thoſe ingredients before.

To this I might anſwer in general, that my deſign here is not directly to prove the unity of God; the proof of that I ſhall endeavour to make out afterwards, and in its proper place. It is ſufficient to the confutation of atheiſm, that there is ſome being, or beings, endow'd with all thoſe perfections, which are contain'd in the common idea, men have ever agreed in, concerning the divine nature. However, ſince the ill effects of any prejudice, which may ariſe from what is here objected, cannot be too timely prevented, I ſhall, by the way, propoſe the following particulars to be conſider'd.

1. IT is only ſuppos'd in the objection, and without any manner of proof, that notwithſtanding what has been ſaid, there may exiſt more beings, to whom we attribute all perfection, than one. And for the ſame reaſon we ſay, there may exiſt, but one.

2. IF the common reaſon and judgment of mankind be of any weight to determine us in this point, they have almoſt univerſally concurr'd in the belief of one God. The greateſt *Polytheiſts* have ever acknowledg'd ſome ſupreme Deity, which if they had been requir'd to account for the ſupremacy of, or to explain what they meant by it, they muſt by neceſſary conſtruction have underſtood, and confeſs'd the unity. It was from the belief of this article, tho' few had the courage, eſpecially after the death of *Socrates*, openly to aſſert it, that thoſe who were charg'd with atheiſm, incurr'd that imputation; and therefore *Voſſius*[*] ſeems in the main to judge very right, in ſaying, *'tis reaſonable to think, they were falſly call'd atheiſts; by the chriſtians, becauſe the heathens reputed them atheiſts, and repreſented them ſo in their writings; by the heathens, becauſe they look'd upon their gods, as really no Gods.* Tho' whether the judgment of this learned man, be univerſally true, will admit of ſome diſpute. It will be hard, in particular, to acquit *Epicurus*, and his followers, from the charge of atheiſm upon it. As to the philoſophers who publickly oppos'd atheiſm, and yet conform'd to the idolatrous rites eſtabliſh'd by the laws, we are to conſider them in general only as occaſional hypocrites, who conſulted their temporal eaſe and ſafety, more than the inward peace and ſatisfaction of their minds. This reflection is certainly juſt with reſpect to *Plato*, one of the greateſt men among them, who in his book of Laws baniſhes the *Greek* ſuperſtition out of his common-wealth, and in ſeveral places of that and his other works expoſes it both with ſolid arguments, and in a fine vein of raillery; yet in another place he not only recommends conformity to the idolatrous rites of his country; but upon this conſideration, that they derive their original from heaven; which is the more to be admir'd, becauſe few writers, heathen or chriſtian, have expreſs'd themſelves concerning the ſimplicity of the divine nature in a more juſt, moving and ſublime manner. But we are the leſs ſurpriz'd at a practice among the heathen, contrary to the real ſentiments of their minds, which we have known in the reaſon and foundation of it, even openly contended for by thoſe, who profeſs chriſtianity.

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[*] *Rationi magìs conſentaneum eſt, atheos vocatos; à noſtris quidem, quia ſic apud gentiles legiſſent; à gentilibus vero. Quia deos gentium pro diis non haberent.* De idolat. l. 1. c. 1.

3. To ſuppoſe more Gods than one, is not neceſſary towards enabling us to account either for the origin, the formation, or government of the world: Nay, the ſuppoſition of a plurality of Gods does rather tend in all theſe reſpects to embaraſs and perplex us. And tho' we cannot indeed infer from this maxim, *nature does nothing in vain*, that there is but one being, who is the author of nature, becauſe nature is only to be conſider'd as a ſubſequent law or inſtitution; yet ſo far this may ſeem a reaſonable rule to us, and has been thought ſo in the preſent argument, that we ought not to multiply beings, or any cauſes whatever, without neceſſity, or the leaſt viſible occaſion for them.

4. A ſelf-exiſtent being, which we have prov'd there muſt be ſome where, or other, exiſts by the moſt abſolute and unbounded neceſſity, that can be imagin'd. But to ſay there are more ſelf-exiſtent beings than one, is to imply not an abſolute, but a limited neceſſity of their exiſtence, which reſtrains them to a definite number: For an abſolute and unlimited neceſſity, muſt in all reſpects have an abſolute and unlimited effect. Except therefore it ſhould be ſaid, what I think was never yet ſaid, that the Gods are infinite in number, it ſeems the moſt reaſonable, not to ſay abſolutely neceſſary, to conclude for the unity of God; a unite being the number, that comes indeed the neareſt to infinity, and gives us the beſt repreſentation of it. But I ſhall more particularly conſider the proof of this attribute, from the idea of ſelf-exiſtence, in the ſequel.

5. As to what is objected, on account of certain qualities ariſing from compound bodies, which were not ſeparately, in thoſe bodies before, we anſwer, that the objection proceeds upon a falſe ſuppoſition, as if ſuch qualities were really inherent in the bodies themſelves; whereas if we may in an improper ſenſe attribute them to bodies, they are at moſt but the ſeveral parts of bodies, and which therefore actually exiſted before, put into a different ſite and motion. But in truth, what we call qualities in bodies, are only certain ſenſations in our ſelves, which bodies are the cauſes, and perhaps merely the occaſional cauſes of. Let us compound bodies as much as we pleaſe, there will be nothing ſtill in them, or what we can conceive properly belonging to them, but magnitude, figure, place, and motion. We attribute, for inſtance, the quality of heat to fire, becauſe fire produces, or is the occaſion of producing the ſenſation of heat in us. But a man may with equal reaſon ſuppoſe pain in the ſword, wherewith he is wounded, or pleaſure in the fruit, which he taſtes, as that fire is really hot in itſelf. It is nothing but the violent and rapid motion of certain particles of matter, which entring the pores of the

body in great numbers, like ſo many fine and pointed lancets, make us ſenſible of what we call heat; but which, for any thing we know to the contrary, might, if God had ſo pleas'd, as well, and by as natural an efficiency, have given us the ſenſation of cold.

IT muſt be own'd this error, that there are certain real qualities in bodies, like what we feel from the impreſſions they make on us, is very ancient; as indeed moſt errors proceeding from the illuſions of ſenſe are. *Ocellus Lucanus*, in his treatiſe concerning the eternity of the world, tells us, that honey does not only affect us with a ſweet taſte, but is really ſweet of itſelf, or in its own nature *. This is more pardonable however, than his argument for the eternity of the world, from the uniform and ſpherical figure of it. How are the fathers inſulted, when among many good arguments in confirmation of what they advance, they happen to employ one that is weak, or improper; or which perhaps is not deſign'd ſtrictly ſo much for an argument, as an illuſtration; and yet this is the argument wherein one of the greateſt authority with the atheiſts ſeems to place his † main ſtrength and confidence; but who was no atheiſt himſelf; for he acknowledges not only the exiſtence of God, but of Dæmons, and very juſtly aſcribes certain appetites and inclinations of human nature to the gift of God ‡. Yet in the main, the reaſonings of that celebrated book, ſince I have mention'd it, are very weak and trifling, and there is very little to recommend the performance, except that he concludes, with certain moral inſtructions, which yet are dry enough, by way of advice to thoſe, who would enter into the marry'd ſtate, or educate their children to advantage.

BUT to anſwer ſtill more fully to the point in queſtion; ſuppoſing more ſelf-exiſtent beings than one, they cannot be conceiv'd to combine, by means of certain powers jointly reſulting from them, towards the production of any quality or perfection, which was not before ſeparately and ſeverally in them. Becauſe there being the ſame abſolute neceſſity for the exiſtence of them all, they muſt all have abſolutely the ſame perfection. For how can the perfections of one be thought different from thoſe of another;

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* Ἐξ ἑαυτȣ̃.

† It muſt be acknowledg'd his argument, that what communicates any perfection, muſt have that perfection more eminently in its own nature, is very true and juſt, when conſider'd in itſelf; but can be of no ſignificancy in the place where it ſtands, or in order to prove the eternity of the material world, except he could have prov'd that matter, under any poſſible conjunction, might be capable of the perfections we deny to it. This was the thing in queſtion, or ought to have been; and therefore what he argues from it, as a thing taken for granted, is of no conſideration at all.

‡ Ὑπὸ τȣ̃ θεȣ̃ δεδομένας. c. 4.

Or what perfection can be wanting to them all, and which they muſt therefore concur to the production of, when none of them could have any other principle of exiſtence, but abſolute perfection itſelf? Thoſe, who contend there may poſſibly be more Gods than one, are ſo ſenſible of this, that they ſuppoſe them ſo equally powerful, wiſe, and good, and in all reſpects ſo equally perfect, that there is no other way of diſtinguiſhing them, but by their ſeparate exiſtence. On all other accounts, they are ſo perfectly one, that the diſtinction between them is without any manner of conceivable difference.

After all, what is brought to illuſtrate the objection I have been ſpeaking to, is altogether foreign and improper to the purpoſe. Let us admit that certain ſenſible qualities may really inhere in bodies, or reſult from certain combinations of them; yet what is this to ſuch perfections, which cannot proceed, or be imagin'd to proceed, from any ſyſtem of matter, however modify'd, or compounded, but can only reſide in a ſubject that admits of no compoſition; and therefore muſt of neceſſity be deriv'd from ſomething, as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew more particularly afterwards, that is not matter, but of a nature and ſubſtance, wholly different from it.

Chap. III.

That the being, which we have prov'd to be God, is not a material being.

The attribute of God, which occurs to our thoughts previous to all his other attributes, and muſt neceſſarily, as we have ſeen, belong to him, is that of ſelf-exiſtence. Let us conſider with all the attention we can, firſt, whether there be any thing in the nature or idea of matter, upon which this attribute may be reaſonably founded, or apply'd to it; and, ſecondly, whether on the other hand, tho' we ſhould really ſuppoſe matter ſelf-exiſtent, there are not certain powers or perfections obſervable in the preſent ſtate of things, the origin whereof cannot be accounted for from any known properties of matter, or the parts of matter, under any poſſible combination.

1. How attentively ſoever we examine the properties of matter, and the nature of it can only be known from what is obſerv'd concerning its properties, we are not able to diſcover any thing, that

may give it the leaſt pretenſion to this ſuperior character of ſelf-exiſtence. When we look upon any part of matter without life, or ſenſible motion, it appears at firſt view to be a rude, impotent, and ſtupid maſs; ſo far from having any appearance in its own nature, of neceſſary exiſtence, that we wonder, by what other power it was brought into being, or how it could ever have been, by virtue of omnipotent power itſelf, in any capacity of exiſting at all. This, I take it, will be granted, that, notwithſtanding the evidence of ſenſe, the arguments even againſt the actual exiſtence of matter, are much ſtronger than any which can be produc'd to ſhew, that it might poſſibly have exiſted of itſelf. A ſelf-exiſtent being, does not indeed imply any thing whatever antecedent to its exiſtence, yet in the natural order of our ideas, it ſeems neceſſarily to imply ſome active internal principle in its own nature, and the moſt active, we can poſſibly conceive, which, tho' not prior to its exiſtence, muſt however be ſuppos'd eternally concomitant with it. But to ſuppoſe an abſolute neceſſity of exiſting in a being, the nature whereof infers no ſuch neceſſity, but rather deſtroys the conception of it, is to ſuppoſe an abſolute neceſſity, without any neceſſity, or any imaginable grounds for it.

2. Let us make a ſtep farther, in order to ſupport the claim of matter to this high prerogative of ſelf-exiſtence. Let us no longer conſider it, as a dead and ſtupid being, or at reſt, but in all the beautiful variety of motion and life; yet ſtill we are no nearer to the proof of its neceſſary exiſtence, or to any viſible way of conceiving it. For beſides, that matter is ſo far from neceſſarily including in it the idea of motion, that we are not able to apprehend how it ſhould poſſibly move itſelf, but on the other hand, are certain, even to demonſtration, that it cannot move itſelf, nor could ever put itſelf originally in motion; not to inſiſt, I ſay, on this conſideration, whatever different effects we may obſerve in the world of motion or life, matter conſider'd as the ſubject of them, is ſtill ſpecifically, and in all the natural powers and virtues of it the ſame. The dirt we tread upon, has all the eſſential properties of matter, with the diamond, whoſe luſtre we ſo much admire; it is only a different contexture of parts, and a different light, which occaſions the mighty difference, in the account we make of them, and cauſes us to deſpiſe and avoid that ſubſtance in the one, which we ſo much value, and deſire to poſſeſs in the other.

The reaſon is the ſame with reſpect to things that have life, whether vegetative or animal. The flower, which with a delicate mixture of colours tempts the eye, or the ripening fruit, which provokes the appetite, are only the parts of matter diſpoſ'd and actuated after a different manner. And therefore we may obſerve, the fineſt flowers, and the moſt delicious Fruits, ſometimes owe their nutriment and increaſe to ſuch kind of matter, as is moſt offenſive to the ſenſes, which themſelves have the greateſt power to gratify.

As to animals, whoſe conſtruction is yet more admirable, if their operations be purely mechanical, they are nothing but matter ſtill differently mov'd and modify'd. But what connection is there between the idea of a ſelf-exiſtent being, and a being capable of ſuch and ſuch modifications, and which, after all, is not capable of modifying itſelf. If animals be not mere machines, or there be any intelligent faculty in them, above the power of matter, however modify'd, to produce, this is nothing to the queſtion concerning the ſelf-exiſtence of matter, but rather proves, that there is ſome other being, diſtinct from matter, to which the origin of ſuch a faculty muſt neceſſarily be aſcrib'd.

3. If matter be ſelf-exiſtent, every particle of matter is evidently ſo too, and ſo contrary to what we have inferr'd, there would be more ſelf-exiſtent beings than one. For parts, as to their exiſtence, neceſſarily follow the nature and reaſon of the whole. There can be no poſſible cauſe aſſign'd or imagin'd, why the parts, whereof gold is form'd, ſhould have an eternal and neceſſary exiſtence, and thoſe, which form water or duſt, ſhould only have a temporary and contingent exiſtence. Much leſs are we able to conceive, how the ſame parts of gold, or of any piece of gold, which are indefinite at leaſt in number, ſhould admit of ſuch a diſtinction. Now what is diviſible, into ſeparate parts, may be ſeparately number'd, and muſt therefore conſiſt of as many parts, as it may be divided into. For tho' we talk abſtractedly both concerning matter and mind, as if they were reſpectively but one being, yet one part of matter is really and numerically as diſtinct from other parts of matter, as the ſoul of one man is from that of another[*]. Tho' there is this defect indeed in the illuſtration, that no one part of matter, how minute ſoever, can be aſſign'd, which is not diviſible into more parts; a conſideration, which may be farther improv'd to ſhew, that matter cannot be the ſelf-exiſtent being[†]; ſince whatever conſiſts of parts, is not a ſimple, but a mix'd be-

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[*] What Mr. *Lock* ſays on this occaſion, is very juſt. "Though our general or ſpecifick conception of matter, makes us ſpeak of it as one thing, yet really matter is not one individual thing; neither is there any ſuch thing exiſting as one material being, or one ſingle body that we know, or can conceive.

[†] *Lactantius* aſſigns it as the reaſon, why *Epicurus* deny'd the Gods to have conſiſted of any combination of atoms, becauſe he believ'd them eternal. *Lact. de Ira. cap.* 10. But this reaſon would have held the ſtronger, if to the idea of eternity, he had added that of ſelf-exiſtence.

ing, and all compounding parts muſt be, in the natural order of our conceiving things, before what is compounded, or at leaſt abſolutely neceſſary to the compoſition of it; ſo that the compound would not be abſolutely and neceſſarily ſelf-exiſtent, but only the conſtituent parts previous to it. And theſe again being infinitely diviſible, the argument, by involving thoſe who oppoſe it in a labyrinth, muſt ſtill hold inconteſtably good.

But allowing, there is no weight in any of theſe arguments againſt the ſelf-exiſtence of matter, and that they are all to go for nothing; let us proceed to enquire,

Secondly, Whether, tho' we ſhould really ſuppoſe matter ſelf-exiſtent, there are not certain powers and perfections obſervable in the preſent ſtate of things, the origin whereof cannot be accounted for from any known principles of matter, or parts of matter, under any poſſible combination.

We need not go far for the diſcovery of ſuch powers and perfections, they are *not in heaven* alone, *that one ſhould ſay, who will go up for us to heaven, and bring* the report of *them down unto us, that we may hear it.* There indeed they are in the higheſt degree of elevation, and in the greateſt extent poſſible, but we poſſeſs them in ſome inferior meaſure our ſelves; we are conſcious of them in the operation of our own minds, and can no more queſtion their exiſtence, than our own.

And for this reaſon, one would think, there ſhould be no queſtion in nature, more obvious or natural to us, than how we came by ſuch characters of diſtinction? And to what we owe the origin of them? 'Tis an amazing thing to conſider, that ſeveral of the ancient philoſophers, who travell'd far and wide in their ſearch after knowledge, and made conſiderable progreſs in diſcovering the reaſons and cauſes of other things, yet ſeem never to have enquir'd, except in a very ſuperficial manner, whence they deriv'd the very capacity of making their diſcoveries. This was not only the defect of thoſe great men, who went in queſt of the ſciences to viſit foreign countries, but of all the great men, in general, of antiquity. It may be ſaid, without reproaching them unjuſtly, they were like perſons, who are always roving abroad, and very inquiſitive after things, of no ſignificancy in themſelves, or that do not in the leaſt concern them, while they neglect the ſtate of their own affairs at home, and which are of the laſt importance to them.

We may here obſerve the true occaſion why ſo many perſons of the brighteſt talents, and the moſt indefatigable induſtry, run ſeverally into almoſt infinite errors; and the generality of them, into the common principles, upon which the idolatry and ſuperſtition of the heathen world were founded. For never ſo much as once examining, or with any due attention (what, it may be thought, of all other ſubjects could not have eaſily eſcap'd them) how they came to be thinking beings, and what the proper diſtinguiſhing characters of ſuch beings are; but taking it for granted, that there was nothing in the world but matter and motion, it is no wonder they not only believ'd a ſupreme material Deity, but multiply'd the inferior deities to ſo vaſt a number. Tho' indeed, if matter were the original parent of all the Gods, the ſupremacy of one God above the reſt, was only a precarious ſuppoſition; for it was poſſible for the ſame common cauſe, acting in variety of inſtances, to produce the ſame common effect.

It will appear however, admitting this principle, that what is not intelligent of itſelf, may produce what is intelligent; or a thinking being is not really diſtinct from a material being; it will appear from hence, I ſay, that the Theology and Polytheiſm of the heathens had at leaſt a poſſible foundation. For if the Gods were firſt produc'd from a certain fermentation of any ſuppos'd chaos, or any other particular diſpoſition of matter, if they deriv'd their divinity and being from Gods, which were themſelves, or *by nature*, no Gods, why may we not more eaſily ſuppoſe them ſucceſſively generated, or multiply'd afterwards by marriage, and to as great a number, as *Varro* records in his time, or rather without any definite number at all.

Upon this hypotheſis, the theology of *Heſiod* will have nothing in it, ſo very romantick or ridiculous, as it is commonly repreſented to have; matter being once put in motion, and producing an intelligent being, there is no contradiction at leaſt in the nature of the thing, to ſay, it may produce more ſuch beings than one, or any determinate number of them, we may think fit to aſſign.

And the temper of atheiſm is ſuch, that we ſhall in vain attack or purſue it, with all the force our reaſon is able to ſupply, while we leave it ſo much as a poſſible refuge. Allowing it then not impoſſible for certain parts of matter, after infinite trials and rencounters, to fall at laſt in ſome happy critical moment, into that exact order, and with that ſtated degree of motion, which is neceſſary to the production of thought; ſhould we repreſent to an atheiſt the difficulty of conceiving how ſuch parts of fluid matter ſhould continue for any time in a ſtate, which depended on a concurrence of ten thouſand accidental cauſes, and which has now no one viſible cauſe to preſerve ſo admirable a ſyſtem, or hinder its conſtituent parts from flying off one from another; ſhould we aſk him, whether it be not more likely, that ſome new accident ſhould diſturb and ſubvert ſuch a ſtate, than that any accident, much leſs ſo inconceivable a number of accidents, ſhould have originally conſpir'd to effect it; or, when once effected, how it ſhould be able to produce another ſtate of things, out of which a ſeries of thinking beings ſhould continually ariſe, or be propagated after a regular and uniform manner; ſhould we aſk him farther, if it be not much more reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that there is ſome other being diſtinct from matter, who knows exactly the figure, order, and degree of motion in the parts of it, neceſſary to preſerve the wonderful ſyſtem we are ſpeaking of, and to whom all matter is entirely ſubject. Tho' on all theſe accounts the atheiſt will own himſelf preſs'd with great difficulties, yet ſtill he pretends his ſcheme is poſſible, and conſequently that the proofs of an eternal or immaterial being, are not ſuch, as he is neceſſarily oblig'd to aſſent to, or to quit the great pleaſures, and advantages in this world for the ſake of, ſeeing; after all, there may be no ſuch being. I need not obſerve this is a very wrong way of arguing; there is reaſon, however, to believe, it may have ſomething in it too common, and ought therefore to be number'd not only among the general cauſes of error and incredulity, but thoſe too of corruption.

This principle then, I repeat it again, that a thinking being is not really diſtinct from a material being, but only a certain modification of it, cannot be too ſtrongly oppos'd. As it has been one occaſion, at leaſt, of miſleading the greateſt men, I may add, a far greater part of mankind, into the moſt groſs abſurdities in point of doctrine, it has alſo tended very much to promote vice and impiety; ſo that divines eſpecially are concern'd to employ all the force they can bring againſt it, and, if poſſible, to explode it out of the world, both upon a theological, and a moral account. It has been already obſerv'd, how much Polytheiſm and idolatry were originally owing to it. And perhaps in thoſe kingdoms or countries, where Paganiſm at this time prevails, they are ſtill principally ſupported by it. The great men, indeed, of antiquity, who were carry'd away with this common notion, differ'd ſomewhat in the particular account they gave, concerning the origination of their Gods. Some with *Anaximenes* ſuppos'd them generated from air, ſome with *Thales* from water, moſt of them from one or other of the four elements, but, which came to the ſame thing, almoſt all of them from matter. It was this principle which ſpead itſelf, like one univerſal corruption, through all the writings of the ancients poets, who were the great oracles of religion, and in whoſe books the people ſought for the articles of their faith. *Homer*, in particular, whom a celebrated critick *, and not without appearance of reaſon, makes the great father of Polytheiſm, has given ſo very ridiculous a repreſentation of his Gods (which we are leſs to wonder at by the way, when 'tis conſider'd how he derives their origin †) that notwithſtanding the ſuperior excellencies of his poem, and many pious and moral reflections that occur in it, it may be queſtion'd, whether the good effects of them, have ever been a ſufficient antidote againſt the poiſon of his theology, or whether they are able, as to young and injudicious perſons, at preſent, to balance the ill impreſſions of it. Thoſe, who conſult the paſſages of *Plato*, wherein he attacks *Homer* on occaſion of his aſcribing to the Gods an original and manners ſo very unworthy of them, will obſerve, that the philoſopher, tho', as we have confeſs'd before, he outwardly conform'd to the religion of his country eſtabliſh'd by the laws, yet had a great zeal for aſſerting the dignity and perfection of the divine nature. This prompted him to laſh *Homer* for the characters of his ſeveral deities, with a ſatyr, that might have become the ſeverity and ardour of a chriſtian father, except perhaps that in ſome places his wit is too luxuriant for the gravity of his ſubject. But the true reaſon, it is probable, why *Plato* was acted with ſo ſtrong and juſt a zeal againſt the pagan and poetical deities, proceeded from the diſcovery he had made concerning the neceſſity of acknowledging an immaterial ſubſtance diſtinct from matter, and in conſequence concerning the falſhood of that ‡ principle, whereby ſuch deities had been at firſt introduc'd.

But the ſame principle, where-ever it is entertain'd, has alſo a viſible tendence to favour corruption. When men once believe, that their thoughts, or their ſenſations of pleaſure and pain, are nothing but the reſult of matter and motion, depending on the preſent mechanical ſtructure of the body, they will be apt to conclude, that when the mechaniſm of the body is diſſolved, they can have nothing farther to ſuffer or enjoy, but will undergo a change, that will terminate all their hopes, and all their fears at once. It will be natural, I ſay, for ſuch men, to expreſs themſelves in the language of thoſe libertines, who are introduc'd by the author of the book of wiſdom, and to follow their maxims. *Come on therefore, let us enjoy the good things, that are preſent, and let no flower of the ſpring paſs by us: Let none of us go without his part of voluptuouſneſs.* And indeed, when we turn our eyes upon the preſent ſtate of chriſtians themſelves, it may be aſſign'd as one very probable reaſon, why the ſpiritual truths of the goſpel, and the future rewards it promiſes, make ſo little impreſſion on them, that, following the illuſions of ſenſe, they are not thoroughly convinc'd of a being, diſtinct from matter, or a corporeal ſubſtance. It may be doubted, whether a great number of men profeſſing chriſtianity, have not been ſo ill inſtructed concerning the ſpirituality of the divine nature, that ſhould we preſs them to explain their ſentiments upon this article, they would not be much different from thoſe of the ancient *Anthropomorphites.* Under this prejudice, it is no wonder, if nothing, but ſenſible objects, have any power to influence or move them; or that we can, without the greateſt difficulty, perſuade them, there are really any objects ſubſiſting without a body. This makes their imagination repreſent death to them, whereby their bodies are to be diſſolv'd, as a kind of annihilation, at moſt as a perfect ſtate of inſenſibility. This reaſon, why ſo many chriſtians want true faith, and are conſequently leſs regular in their lives, is perhaps more general, than men commonly ſuppoſe.

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* Mr. *Rapin*.

† 'Ωκεανόν τε Θεῶν γένεσιν ϗ μητέρα τηθύν.

‡ Yet, it muſt be own'd, *Plato*, in ſeveral places, ſpeaks concerning the Gods in the common dialect, and more like a citizen than a philoſopher of *Athens*. This he does, as himſelf acknowledges, in complaiſance to the traditions, and generally receiv'd rites of his country, and even in his *Timæus*, where he aſſerts the unity of God, and argues for it. But this acknowledgment, we may juſtly ſuſpect, was made for ſome indirect end, and contrary to his real judgment; eſpecially ſince he tells us in the ſame book, that 'tis impoſſible for us not to believe, what has been reported concerning the children of the Gods, tho' founded on no great appearance of truth or probability. 'Αδύνατον οὖν θεῶν παισὶν ἀπιστεῖν, καίπερ ἄνευ τε εἰκότων ϗ ἀναγκαίων ἀποδείξεων λέγουσιν. *Tim. p.* 40. Whereas it is ſo far from being impoſſible, not to believe the fabulous and chimerical accounts concerning the genealogy of the Gods, that 'tis ſcarce poſſible to think, that ever any man did really give credit to them, or that *Plato*, in particular, could believe them, upon his own principles.

The conceſſion even of thoſe, who ſay matter may be capable of thought, by virtue of a power ſuperadded to it by God, ſeems to do no great ſervice to religion; I know this conceſſion is made in honour to the divine omnipotence, but, beſides that there is no neceſſity of making it on this account, the power of God not extending to things, which are not poſſible objects of any power, it is alſo of dangerous conſequence to faith: For either matter is diſpos'd by God in the compoſition of a human body, or more immediately of the fibres of the brain in ſuch a certain order, or with that determinate degree of motion, which will produce thought; and then, what ought not to be granted to the atheiſt, there is a poſſibility, at leaſt, that matter, one time or other, might have fallen exactly into the ſame curious ſtructure itſelf: Or elſe it muſt be ſaid, the power of thinking ſuperadded to matter, is ſuperadded as a thing really diſtinct from it, as the pen I write with is ſuperadded to the paper upon which I write; yet after ſuch a manner, that what thinks ſhall maintain ſome kind of union and entercourſe with matter, ſo that the impreſſions made upon the body, ſhall occaſion certain ſenſations in the ſoul, and the ſoul in its turn, by a pure act of the will, ſhall excite certain motions in the body. But then we aſſert ſtill, it is not matter which thinks, but the power thus united in an improper ſenſe to matter; no more than 'tis the paper, if ſo inadequate an illuſtration may be allow'd, which produces the thoughts of a writer, tho' it be an occaſion of communicating them to the world.

If it ſtill be objected, that matter has not in itſelf a power of motion, and yet God has ſuperadded ſuch a power to it, ſo that qualities may confeſſedly be impreſs'd on things, which, without an external cauſe, could never have reſulted from the nature of them; and that thought therefore may be a quality of the ſame kind.

I anſwer, it is not true, that a power of motion, in the ſenſe here intended, has been ſuperadded by God to matter. In every motion two things are to be conſider'd, the moving force, and the thing moved. We grant, that matter has a capacity of being mov'd, but that does not prove any thing againſt us, except it could be made appear, that matter has a power of moving itſelf, or exciting motion, as the mind does thought, from ſome internal principle. Motion, with reſpect to the thing mov'd, is purely paſſive, and infers no more, than change of place, which only gives an external denomination. But we cannot conceive therefore, how a being ſhould have an active principle communicated to it, which it cannot in its own nature, according to any poſſible way we have of arguing from our ideas, be the ſubject of.

It ſhould not then be ſaid, that motion is a quality ſuperadded to matter, therefore thought may be ſuperadded to it. But it ſhould be ſaid, a moving force is requir'd to put matter in motion, therefore motion being only a paſſive principle, adds no real quality to matter, but only ſuppoſes it in a tendency towards a different ſituation. But what is this to a principle, which, we are conſcious, acts by an internal determination of itſelf, and not only may be conceiv'd as ſubſiſting independently, which motion cannot, of the ſubject, it is ſuppos'd to inhere in, but let us put our thoughts never ſo much on the ſtretch, and turn them what way we pleaſe, can never be conceiv'd to have any natural or immediate connection with ſuch a ſubject.

Yet leſt all this ſhould be thought precariouſly ſpoken, let us diſcover, if we are able, any method, how matter may be conceiv'd capable of thought, upon any account whatever.

All matter muſt either be ſuppos'd at reſt, or in motion; matter at reſt, or perfectly in a ſtate of inactivity, that is, having no immanent action, can much leſs have any action that is influential towards producing an active principle, which the corporealiſts will acknowledge that of thought to be. For then there would be ſomething in the effect, which is confeſſedly not in the cauſe; from whence this plain contradiction would follow, that ſomething may be cauſ'd by nothing.

IN order therefore to ſuppoſe that matter has a power of thinking, we muſt neceſſarily give it motion. But then again, either every particle of moving matter will have ſuch a power, or only matter moving in a certain order, and to a certain degree. It will not be ſaid, that all matter once put in motion, neceſſarily thinks, and at all times. The doctrine of the ſchoolmen, which atheiſtical wits have ſo often charg'd as an abſurdity upon them; that ten thouſand angels may ſtand at once upon the point of a needle, would be nothing to ſuch a ſuppoſition: for from the infinite, or if that ſhould not be granted, the indefinite diviſibility of matter, it would follow, that a needle's point would actually include a much greater number of thinking beings, or rather a number, which by continual addition, we could never be capable of computing.

IT would follow farther, that the leaſt atom, matter is capable of dividing into, is, not only a thinking being, but a wiſe, ſelf-conſcious, and in all reſpects moſt perfect being; ſeeing every perfection muſt, as we have prov'd before, have originally ſubſiſted in one eternal cauſe, but cannot poſſibly be conceiv'd to ariſe from any complication of material cauſes, and muſt therefore if there be no cauſes, but what are material, be whole and entire in every individual part of matter.

BUT perhaps it may be ſtill objected, that whatever reaſons we may urge againſt the materialiſts on this head, they have experience againſt us; and therefore, tho' every part of matter in motion ſhould not be endow'd with the power of thinking, yet thought may reſult from a combination of ſeveral parts of it, moving after a certain manner; ſince there are in fact qualities reſulting from a due and proper compoſition of material parts, which they had not ſeparately in themſelves, and thoſe not merely ſenſible qualities, as colour, ſound, and the like, which muſt be allow'd to have no real exiſtence, unleſs in the perception, but ſuch powers or qualities as are evidently in the things themſelves, whether we have any perception of them or not, as weeping, ſighing, and laughing, the latter of which is particularly objected on this occaſion by *Lucretius*,

Et ridere poteſt ex non ridentibu' factus.

To which we anſwer, that theſe appearances, tho' they have a real foundation in the things themſelves from which they ariſe, yet are not really diſtinct from matter, but are only the parts of matter in a different poſition, or moving by certain mechanical laws; and there is nothing in them, but may be eaſily accounted for from the known affections or properties of matter. Thus laughing, for inſtance, is nothing elſe, but the motion of certain organs or muſcles proper for that purpoſe, which occaſions a different ſite or contexture of the lips, with a certain vibration of the air, which communicates itſelf to our ears. The poet might with equal reaſon have urg'd, that ſound is really diſtinct from matter, in this or any other caſe. Yet we are ſo far from being able to apprehend, how there ſhould be any ſound without matter or motion, that the ideas of ſound, of matter, and motion, when we compare them, are neceſſarily and inſeparably connected. But will any one ſay, there is ſo neceſſary and inſeparable a connection between the idea of matter and motion, and the idea of thought, that they cannot be conceiv'd apart. This is ſo far from being true, that we have no way of uniting them by any common or intermediate idea, but are forc'd to reſolve the communication that is betweem them into the immediate power and action of God.

But becauſe this is a ſubject of the laſt importance, let us purſue it, till we ſee whether the materialiſts have yet any poſſible retreat; or if matter moving after a certain determinate manner, may not be ſtill capable of thought. It will be granted, that the ſame individual matter, which now thinks in any perſon, did not think ſeven years before he was born, but only that in conſequence of the organization of his body, it began at a certain time to think, and ſtill continues to do ſo. I ask, whether all the parts of matter in the compoſition of this man think, or but ſome one part of it? If all the parts, he would neceſſarily have ſo many different ſenſations, and be as many ways ſelf-conſcious, as there are animal ſpirits playing in the fibres of his brain. If but one of the moving particles think, it muſt be becauſe there is ſomething peculiar in the motion, figure, or ſituation of it, from which thought neceſſarily proceeds. But ſtill this is only ſuppoſing, without any manner of proof, or giving us the leaſt light towards diſcovering the poſſibility of the thing. For what more evident connection is there as yet between motion, figure, or place, and thought, than between thought and matter perfectly at reſt?

Setting aſide experience, and the conſideration, that thought ſeems to perform all its functions by occaſion of the animal ſpirits, in ſome part of the brain, there is no more connection in the natural reaſon of the thing, between thought and the animal ſpirits,

rits, than between thought, and the nails of our fingers. To ſay, after all, that the animal ſpirits may be the inſtruments of thought, not as occaſional, but efficient cauſes, tho' we cannot conceive how they ſhould be ſo, and even contrary to all our ideas of the nature and properties of matter, which are the only foundation of our reaſoning concerning them, is by a plain inference to leave us no foundation to reaſon upon in any caſe.

DEMOCRITUS was ſo ſenſible of this conſequence, that if every atom be deſtitute of a ſoul, every combination of atoms muſt be ſo too, that there was no particular atom, to which he did not aſſign a ſoul. And tho' *Epicurus*, who borrow'd in a manner all his materials from this author, if we believe *Cicero*[*], look'd upon this principle as taken for granted, or only precariouſly advanc'd to ſerve an hypotheſis, and therefore, concluding it more becoming a philoſopher, to aſſign ſome cauſe or other of things, rather than none at all, reſolv'd the cauſe and origin of thought into certain modifications of matter; yet it is not eaſy to determine which of the two, for they were both in the wrong, had the greater appearance of reaſon on his ſide. To ſuppoſe thought originally, and in fact eſſential to matter, without aſſigning any cauſe, why it ſhould be ſo, ſeems altogether as reaſonable, as to ſuppoſe that by certain motions or ſtrictures, it may in time acquire a power of thinking, without being able to ſhew, how it can poſſibly do ſo. We muſt grant however, the attempt of *Epicurus* to account for every thing from the two principles of matter and motion, has by accident done the cauſe of theiſm this ſervice, that at the ſame time it diſcovers his wit and invention, it expoſes the weakneſs of the moſt ſpecious arguments that can be produc'd for his hypotheſis, which has occaſion'd men to make more ſtrict and methodical enquiries concerning the nature of matter, and the origin and ſtructure of the material world[†].

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[*] *Quid eſt in Epicuri phyſicis, non à Democrito?* Cic. de nat. deor.

[†] Falſe and ill founded, as the *Epicurean* hypotheſis is, yet it has given occaſion for philoſophiſing, after a more juſt, and ſtrict manner. *Burnet*'s *Archæol.*

CHAP. IV.

That the being, which we have prov'd to be God, cannot be the one ſubſtance of Spinoſa.

THO' what has been ſaid, in the laſt chapter, is in general ſufficient to overthrow the ſyſtem of *Spinoſa*, founded on his principle of one ſubſtance, yet there being other arguments, whereby this apoſtate may be perſonally attack'd, and which 'tis impoſſible for his followers to evade the force of, it may be of ſome ſervice to the cauſe of religion, to employ them in a diſtinct chapter. But before we proceed to examine or confute the hypotheſis of *Spinoſa*, it will be proper to give a ſummary account of it.

THIS atheiſtical writer then maintain'd, that there is but one infinite ſubſtance in the world, endow'd with infinite attributes, and modifying itſelf infinite ways; that all beings in the univerſe, are but that one ſubſtance differently modify'd, who continually produces in himſelf whatever exiſts, and is the ſole and immediate ſubject of every property, paſſion, and action in the world, and, diſtinct from whoſe ſubſtance, there neither is, nor can poſſibly be conceiv'd any thing.

THE old doctrine concerning the ſoul of the world, if it had been methodically explain'd, would have differ'd very little from this. They, who believ'd the world actuated, and inform'd by one common ſoul, diffus'd through the ſeveral ſpecies of beings, did not take it for a ſubſtance really diſtinct from matter, but only for a certain ſpirituous faculty, or ſublimated power of it. This power was ordinarily expreſs'd by that equivocal term, nature; a word, which tho' it had no certain or determinate idea itſelf, yet ſerv'd to explain every thing elſe. If you ask'd, how the ſun came to be plac'd at ſuch a diſtance from the earth, as to cauſe the variety of ſeaſons, and to diſtribute through the courſe of his annual revolution an equal ſhare of light to the ſeveral parts of it, why, it was nature that gave him that happy and advantagious ſituation. Here was one anſwer, in a word, that ſolv'd all difficulties; nature produc'd, and did every thing. Whereas thoſe very perſons, who attributed ſo much to nature, had they carry'd their enquiries concerning it in the leaſt forward, muſt have diſcover'd, that either it was an intelligent being, really diſtinct from the material world, or elſe, that it was only a term of amuſement, which in truth had no ſignification at all.

THE modifications of the one ſubſtance of *Spinoſa*, tho' he has digeſted his principles into a regular ſyſtem, are only a different expreſſion for that of nature, and as precariouſly advanced. For he attributes the ſame effects to thoſe modifications, which the ancient philoſophers did to nature, and with as little reaſon. They have equally taken the main point in queſtion for granted, and which it was impoſſible for them to prove, that the idea of a thinking, and the idea of an extended being, were applicable to the ſame ſubject. Nature with them was the cauſe of all that infinite variety of things, which has happen'd in the world; body with him has a power of modifying itſelf infinite ways. They are equally deficient in explaining, how a paſſive principle, incapable in its own nature even of motion, ſhould modify itſelf, or be capable of thought; or how it ſhould communicate thoſe powers and perfections, which are not contain'd in the idea, nor can be conceiv'd to reſult from any known or imaginable properties of it.

IT is no wonder, that *Spinoſa*, in conſequence of his principles, deny'd miracles. For miracles being above the power of material cauſes, or thoſe laws whereby the one ſubſtance neceſſarily acts and modifies itſelf, were for that reaſon impoſſible to his Deity, ſeeing he muſt have exerted a power in them, above his power. But, for the ſame reaſon, *Spinoſa* ought to have deny'd, there is any ſuch thing in the world as cogitation, to produce thought out of ſenſeleſs and ſtupid matter, appearing, upon an impoſſible ſuppoſition, to be the greateſt miracle of all.

STRABO * thererefore, with whom nature was the only principle, is juſtly confuted by *Lactantius* † in the following paſſage. “ It is idle to ſuppoſe, that any thing ſhould have a power of ge“nerating a living or ſenſitive creature, which in itſelf is without “ life, ſenſe, or figure. The argument would have held much ſtronger with reſpect to reaſonable and free agents. And to ſuppoſe thought, with *Ariſtotle* ‡, a quinteſſence drawn off from certain material ingredients, like ſpirits of wine from the lees, would afford us but a very poor ſolution to this argument. Matter however ſublimated or refin'd, being nothing ſtill but matter, and acquiring no powers or properties diſtinct from it The fifth eſſence therefore of this philoſopher ought to be placed in the ſame rank, with his ſubſtantial forms, being an abſtruſe term, without any proper ſignification, or, as *Cicero* * obſerves, admitting of no other word or expreſſion to explain the meaning of it.

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* *Omnem vim divinam in naturâ eſſe cenſet, quæ cauſas gignendi, augendi, minuendi habeat, ſed careat omni ſenſu, & figurâ.* Cic.

† De ira. cap. 10.

‡ *Quintam quandam naturam.* Cic. Tuſc. q. lib. 1.

Another principle, upon which *Spinoſa* founds his ſyſtem, demonſtratively falſe, and, if I miſtake not, now allow'd by all the learned world to be ſo, is that of a *Plenum.* The reaſon of his ſuppoſing matter infinitely extended, was, that he thought the indiviſibility of his one ſubſtance could not be otherways tenable; or becauſe, if he had allow'd it diviſible, or conſiſting of ſeparate and diſtinct parts, he apprehended, perhaps, that the following argument could receive no ſolid or ſatisfactory anſwer. If God is a corporeal being, and yet a being which has perfection, the perfection of his nature, is found in all the individual parts of his body, or in one alone, or in ſome power or quality reſulting from the contexture of them all. If in all the parts of his body, then there is, at leaſt, a plurality of Gods; if but in one part, all the reſt are ſuperfluous and unneceſſary; if in certain powers and qualities reſulting from the whole, the corporeal Deity muſt have been in order of time, perhaps many ages before the intelligent Deity; and ſo God, which *Spinoſa* would not admit, conſider'd as an intelligent being, had not been a neceſſary or eternal, but merely a temporary and contingent being.

Another attribute of the God of *Spinoſa,* and which he found it neceſſary to aſcribe to him, is immutability. But how an unchangeable being can be ſubject to all the variety of accidents and events, which happen in the world, is wholly unaccountable.

When we ſay, that man is a changeable being, we do not mean with reſpect to his ſubſtance, or that he will one time or other be annihilated; but with reſpect to the ſtate of his body or mind. Yet, according to *Spinoſa,* a man may continually alter in the temper or qualities both of body and mind, without ſuffering any alteration in either. He may every moment acquire new modifications, walk or ſit ſtill, be eaſy or in pain, and yet be always in the ſame ſtate, and have the ſame ſenſations. For all theſe different circumſtances do not produce or deſtroy one particle of the matter, whereof he is compos'd; that has ever been, and ever will be unchangeably one ſubſtance.

This, by an obvious deduction, is *Spinoſa*'s argument; but what does it conclude? When we ſpeak of an immutable being, a being that is confeſſedly ſelf-exiſtent, certainly we do not underſtand, that he is immutable as to his exiſtence; that admits of no diſpute; but only as to the manner of his exiſtence, or the qualities proper to him. And in this reſpect the God of *Spinoſa* is ſo far from being immutable, that he ſuffers ten thouſand changes every moment. The *Metamorphoſes*, which poets aſcribe to the heathen deities, are nothing to thoſe, he ſuſtains continually, without the leaſt intermiſſion.

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* *Quintum genus vocantes, vacans nomine.* Cic. Tuſc. q. lib. 1.

SINCE a ſubſtance, for example, can only act or ſuffer, for modes do nothing, and are incapable of either action, or ſuffering, the one ſubſtance, if there be no more than one, muſt at the ſame time act all the injuſtice, and ſuffer all the pains of the whole world: And yet impious and irrational, as ſuch a ſuppoſition would be, this farther abſurdity is neceſſarily conſequent to the doctrine of *Spinoſa*, that the ſame individual ſubſtance would be at once in a ſtate of pleaſure and pain, of ſickneſs and health, maintain contrary principles, be poſſeſſed with contrary paſſions, and purſue inconſiſtent deſigns. If God, I ſay, be the ſubject of every thing, and all the modifications in the univerſe be only ſo many modifications of himſelf or his own individual ſubſtance, theſe with a great many other conſequences, which piety will not ſuffer to be mention'd, would unavoidably follow.

AND yet deſtructive as the ſyſtem of *Spinoſa* is, if we argue by a juſt deduction from it, to all the perfections of the divine nature, and in particular to the felicity of it, there appearing to be in the world, an equal proportion at leaſt of miſery to happineſs, if not a much greater on the ſide of miſery, both which are only different modifications of the divine ſubſtance: Setting aſide, I ſay, theſe and the like conſequences, which directly flow from the principles of *Spinoſa*, his ſyſtem is perhaps in itſelf the moſt plauſible, and the beſt digeſted, of any atheiſtical ſyſtem, that has ever yet appear'd; and were it not for the neceſſity of ſuppoſing a thinking and a corporeal being two diſtinct ſubſtances, would ſtill be more difficultly overthrown. But as the diſtinction between theſe two ſubſtances, is the main ground upon which, as I take it, atheiſm under any appearance, can be ſolidly confuted, I apprehend my ſelf in the leſs danger of being condemned for enlarging ſo much, wherever a proper occaſion offer'd, either in aſſerting, or illuſtrating this diſtinction.

SPINOSA, after all, was not the firſt, tho' father *Raynaudus* *, a learned Jeſuit, repreſents him the firſt, who ſuppos'd but one ſubſtance in the univerſe, and that all things are only different modifications of it. *David* of *Dinant* † expreſly aſſerted, that God was the firſt matter; whom *Thomas* of *Aquin* for that reaſon particularly took upon him, in his book againſt the *Gentiles*, to cenſure and confute; and whoſe own books had been publickly order'd to be burn'd. *Almaricus* *, of whom *David* of *Dinant* was a follower, and who for his impious and atheiſtical principles was him ſelf condemn'd to the flames, maintain'd, that God, he meant the ſubſtance of God, is viſible in his creatures, or the modifications of himſelf, as light is in the air; that the ideas in the divine mind generate, and are generated; and that the ſoul of a contemplative and good man loſes itſelf in its proper ſubſtance, and returns into that ideal ſubſtance, which it had before in the mind of God. As if we were to ſuppoſe the little globes of air, that are rais'd upon the ſurface of a river, and inclos'd in ſo many thin watry membranes, immediately, ſo ſoon as thoſe membranes are broken, diffuſing themſelves again into their proper element, and incorporating with it. Tho' this illuſtration is far from being juſt, or capable of explaining, how the ſoul, when a man dies, returns into the ſubſtance of God. Since, if there be but one ſubſtance, nothing can conceal or divide the ſoul of any particular perſon from it, or intervene between them, like the watry vehicle, we mention'd, between the external air, and the air it incloſes. There is one paſſage in *Seneca* † himſelf, which ſeems to favour the doctrine of one only ſubſtance, and will difficultly bear a ſound interpretation, tho' he could not intend it ſhould be taken in the moſt ſtrict and literal ſenſe. *R. Maimonides* ‡ alſo has on a certain occaſion expreſs'd himſelf concerning the ſubſtance of God after a manner, which at firſt ſight does not ſeem very capable of an orthodox ſenſe. For he ſpeaks of God, as having a body like that of *Spinoſa*'s deity, tho' 'tis probable he did not mean by body, any thing properly material, but only an intelligible extenſion. But I refer the reader for both paſſages to the margin; and have only mention'd theſe particulars to ſhew how cautiouſly we ought to refrain from all ſuch expreſſions, as have the leaſt tendence to confound our ideas of a thinking and a corporeal being, much more from thoſe expreſſions, which directly infer them to be one and the ſame individual being.

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* Diſt. 6. n. 6. thol. nat.

† *Deum eſſe primam materiam aſſerebat. Prateolus in Elench.* Hæreſ. ſub. tit. David Dinant.

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* *Deum non videri in ſe, ſed in creaturis, ſicut lumen in aëre. Ideas quæ ſunt in mente divinà creare & creari poſſe. Mentem contemplativi ſeu beati perdere ſuum eſſe in proprio genere, & redire in illud eſſe ideale, quod habuit in mente divinà.* Id. ſub. tit. Almaric.

† *Totum hoc, quo continemur & unum eſt, & deus; & ſocii ejus ſumus & membra.* Sen. nat. quæſt. lib. 2. c. 45.

‡ *Corpus dei non eſt compoſitum ex conjunctione particularum ejuſmodi individuarum, quales ille creavit; ſed corpus unum continuum, nullam niſi in cogitatione admittens diviſionem.* Doctor. perplex. p. 176.

CHAP. V.

The proof of a God, *from the neceſſity of ſuppoſing a firſt cauſe of motion.*

I Have hitherto conſider'd certain perfections, or qualities, obſervable in the nature of things, whereof matter is altogether an incapable ſubject, and which muſt therefore owe their origin to ſome being, diſtinct from matter. But there is one thing, matter is allow'd capable of having impreſs'd upon it, by ſome external force, which yet no power or force, inherent in itſelf, could ever have produc'd or excited, and that is motion; without which it is evident the material world could never have been form'd according to the preſent model and admirable order of it. Thoſe who contend therefore, that matter once put in motion may be capable of thought, could they demonſtrate what they aſſert, yet would prove nothing againſt the exiſtence of a being diſtinct from matter, and ſuperior to it, except they were able to prove antecedently, either that matter is capable of moving itſelf, or that it has been, tho' without any power of moving itſelf, eternally in motion.

IF it be ſaid, that ſuppoſing matter originally mov'd by ſome external agent, it does not therefore follow, ſuch an agent would be that being we call God, or have all the perfections, which we aſcribe to the divine nature. For the ſoul of man, confeſſedly a finite, imperfect, and dependent being, is not only capable by a mere act of the will of exciting motion in his body, or in ſeveral members of it, at the ſame time; but alſo of altering the courſe or direction, wherewith ſeveral bodies without him are mov'd. We anſwer, it is granted at leaſt from hence, that there is ſome power or other ſuperior to matter, capable of putting it in motion, and acting upon it. But then this power, when we attribute it, for inſtance, to man, if it be properly a power, is only deriv'd, as thoſe other perfections are, whereby he is diſtinguiſh'd, and with them muſt therefore, by a neceſſary progreſſion, ultimately terminate in the fountain of all power, and perfection. Tho' 'tis more reaſonable to think, that the power, man has of moving his own body, or ſome part of it, and even of accelerating or retarding the motion of certain bodies without him, is not ſtrictly and properly a power inherent in himſelf, but only an occaſional effect of the ſupreme power acting in him. Some of the moſt able philoſophers, and who have carry'd their purſuits in ſearch of nature to the greateſt length, being of opinion, that under any conſideration of power, whether phyſical or civil, *there is no power, but of God.* Tho' vain and ungrateful man, who upon this principle, cannot ſo much as move his arm, without the immediate action of God, becauſe he does not ſee or ſenſibly experience his action, blindly imagines, that what he is only the occaſion or inſtrument of doing, is really done by his own ſtrength; and ſo, if his operation be attended with any conſiderable and important conſequences, without taking the true cauſe into the account, arrogates to himſelf the homage, due to it, and thinks he has a right to do ſo.

IT appears indeed highly reaſonable from the nature of the thing, that no power, but that which made matter, ſhould be capable of moving it. Seeing no natural tye or connection can poſſibly be conceived between the body and the ſoul of man, it is as eaſy to apprehend, how a finite being ſhould make matter, as how it ſhould have a power of putting it in motion, when made; except by virtue of thoſe admirable laws of union, whereby matter and mind now act, reciprocally upon one another, and which laws infinite power alone could eſtabliſh.

BUT whether man act only as an occaſional inſtrument in the hand of God, or whether God may poſſibly communicate a power to him, by which he may be capable of acting immediately himſelf; we muſt ſtill have recourſe at laſt to ſome independent, and eternal power; we muſt carry our views upward on the chain of cauſes, if I may uſe a heathen illuſtration, till we diſcover the foot to which the firſt link of them is ty'd, and which gives motion immediately, or mediately at leaſt to them all.

SHOULD it be granted then, that motion is not a direct and immediate proof of a God, it muſt however be admitted a proof of him by direct and neceſſary conſequence. Except it ſhould be ſaid, that matter, tho' it have no inherent power of moving itſelf, yet has been for ever actually in motion. But this is to aſſign an effect, without any real or imaginable cauſe to produce it; and which, not ariſing from the nature of its ſubject, but being evidently above the power of it, muſt either have been eternally communicated to it by ſome eternal foreign cauſe, or elſe what no body will have the aſſurance to aſſert, muſt have been caus'd by nothing.

THIS argument from motion, as well as that taken from a ſeries of dependent ſucceſſive beings, clearly proves, that the material world could not have been eternal; I mean eternal in the ſtrict and abſolute ſenſe of the word, and as it implies independency of any cauſe. But whether an eternal cauſe could not from all eternity have produc'd the ſame ſtate of things, wherein we now behold them, which was the opinion of *Ariſtotle*, wherein moſt of the ſchoolmen have follow'd him, is rather a queſtion of nice ſpeculation, than of any real importance in the preſent argument. It is ſufficient, that whether we allow the world, in this more reſtrain'd ſenſe, eternal, or ſuppoſe it produc'd at any aſſignable period, we muſt of neceſſity, at the ſame time, ſuppoſe an external cauſe, both of motion, and ſucceſſive generation.

It is difficult, however, to account for the opinion of thoſe philoſophers, or the reaſons of their embracing it; who ſuppoſe matter was originally put in motion, and form'd by God into this beautiful ſcene and order of things, and yet look'd upon it, as a being, eternally coexiſtent with him.

It was very unphiloſophical, in the firſt place, to ſuppoſe a being eternally, and independently exiſtent, in the nature and properties whereof, they could obſerve no imaginable ſigns or reaſons of ſelf-exiſtence; they found it, indeed, actually exiſting, but they ſaw, at the ſame time, it was in a paſſive ſtate. And there do not ſeem to be two more oppoſite or contradictory ideas in the world, than that of a paſſive, and that of a ſelf-exiſtent being. Self-exiſtence, as we obſerv'd before, neceſſarily implying, ſince a ſelf-exiſtent being can have no external cauſe, the ſtrongeſt immanent principle of action and life, that can poſſibly be conceiv'd. I add immanent principle, to prevent all miſtakes concerning the ſignification of the word, ſelf-exiſtence; or as if it imply'd any cauſe or neceſſity whatever in the nature of things, or even in conception, antecedent to the being, which ſelf-exiſts; which in either reſpect would import ſome power, or efficiency, prior to the divine nature, or at leaſt imply, that God was the cauſe of his own exiſtence.

It ſeem'd alſo highly irrational in theſe philoſophers to conclude, that matter, which, in their opinion, was eſſentially independent of God, as to its being, ſhould depend on him, as to the modifications of it. For ſince the properties of things follow the nature of them, how came that, which was independent in its nature, to be dependent in its properties?

Besides theſe phyſical reaſons againſt the ſelf-exiſtence of matter, there is a moral one that *Hierocles* [*] has produc'd, and which does by no means appear contemptible. He argues to this effect, that matter notdepending, as is ſuppos'd, of God for its exiſtence, God could have no right of dominion over it; and that it was contrary to the eternal rectitude of his nature, to make it the ſubject of his action: For why ſhould he diſpoſſeſs of its natural ſtate a co-ordinate being, and eternally co-exiſtent with him.

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[*] This philoſopher, who liv'd in the fifth century, would inſinuate, that *Plato* had the ſame ſentiments concerning the temporary exiſtence of matter; and he writes againſt the *Platoniſts* for perverting the doctrine of their maſter on this head. But it is plain, *Plato* held the eternal concourſe and co-exiſtence of matter with God. *Hierocles* therefore could not borrow this argument from his writings, where it is not to be found, but either form'd it of his own head, or took the hint of it from ſome part of ſacred writ, perhaps the *Moſaick* hiſtory of the creation; but for the honour of *Plato* conceal'd the true occaſion of it.

BUT it may perhaps be urg'd, that all theſe arguments are precariouſly advanc'd, and only upon a ſuppoſition, without proof, that matter cannot poſſibly have a power of moving itſelf. Let us therefore enquire a little more particularly, whether there be no poſſible way of conceiving how matter may be mov'd, without any external cauſe to excite a motion of it.

Now if matter can be ſuppos'd, upon any account, endow'd with a power of motion, ſuch a power muſt either be eſſential to it, or only accidental. Motion cannot, without a foreign cauſe, be accidental to matter, for this plain reaſon, that all accidents in matter, are the effects of motion, and therefore do not produce, but neceſſarily pre-ſuppoſe it in order to their own production.

IF a power of moving itſelf be eſſential to mattter, it muſt be ſo to every particle of matter, as partaking of the ſame nature with the whole. But this is an impoſſible ſuppoſition *; for either the particle to be mov'd muſt have its motion determin'd one way, or have indifferently a tendency to motion every way. A motion determin'd one way, and eſſential to the thing moving, can never be diverted out of that way, or have the line of its direction in the leaſt vary'd, the eſſences of things not being ſubject to change. But if the particle to be mov'd, have indifferently a

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* Dr. *Clark* having ſet this argument, in anſwer to a pernicious opinion, as he juſtly calls it, in a very good light, I ſhall take the liberty to recite it in his own words. “ The
“ eſſential *Conatus* to motion in every one, or of any one particle of matter, in an ima-
“ ginary infinite *Plenum*, muſt be either a *Conatus* to move ſome one determinate way at
“ once, or to move every way at once; a *Conatus* to move ſome one determinate way,
“ cannot be eſſential to any particle of matter, but muſt ariſe from ſome external cauſe,
“ becauſe there is nothing in the pretended neceſſary nature of any particle, to deter-
“ mine its motion neceſſarily and eſſentially one way rather than another: And a *Cona-*
“ *tus* equally to move every way at once, is either an abſolute contradiction, or at leaſt
“ could produce nothing in matter, but an eternal reſt of all and every one of its parts.
“ *Demonſtration of the being and attributes of God.*

Dr. *Cheyne* has alſo an argument to prove motion cannot be eſſential to matter, from the infinite poſſible varieties of its directions; which I ſhall alſo here take occaſion to tranſcribe. “ Laying aſide the conſideration of all other bodies, or ſuppoſing a body
“ moving in *vacuo*, it muſt move in one certain direction. Now what it is that deter-
“ mines it to this direction, rather than to any other of the infinite variety, no reaſon can
“ poſſibly be aſſign'd, why it ſhould move rather in this, than in any other of the infinite
“ number of directions; and it cannot poſſibly move in more than one of them at once,
“ and therefore it will of itſelf move in none of them; *i. e.* it will not of itſelf move at all.
His preceding argument from the preſſure of a ſphere by two other equal ſpheres with equal forces and contrary directions, ſeems alſo very juſt and concluſive. *Philoſophical principles of religion.* p. 114.

tendency to move every way, it is evident it can move no way, ſeeing the endeavour towards motion, would then be perfectly equal on all ſides of it; and no reaſon could be given why it ſhould determine itſelf one way rather than another.

That motion is not eſſential to matter, appears farther from hence, that the idea of matter is not inſeparably united with that of motion. Solidity, extenſion, and figure, are properties which we always attribute to matter, and can never be conceiv'd to ſubſiſt apart from it. We can have no conception of any particle of matter, which does not include theſe three properties; but we can eaſily conceive matter without motion. When we ſpeak of a body being at reſt, we have a clear and diſtinct perception of what we ſay; which yet we could not have, if motion were eſſential to matter, we could then no more ſeparate matter from the idea of motion, than from that of ſolidity, extenſion, or figure.

Another argument againſt a natural power of motion in matter, is taken from what I have ſo often had occaſion to obſerve, its being a paſſive ſubject; ſo far indeed as we can obſerve, the influence of all moving bodies upon one another is reciprocal; they are impell'd, and they impell; they fly from, and embrace; they ſupplant, and give way to one another. But ſtill we are no nearer towards apprehending, how motion was at firſt communicated, and when or by what means this continued circulation of it firſt began. That it could not derive from any inherent power or principle in matter itſelf, ſufficiently appears from all the foregoing conſiderations; it muſt therefore have been impreſs'd upon matter by ſome active principle of a nature and power ſuperior to it, which muſt either immediately, or however in the laſt reſource of it, be that being, whom we call God.

Chap. VI.

The proof of a God from the conſideration of an intending cauſe of things, and of the uſes to which they are adapted.

Should we now admit, in contradiction to what has been clearly prov'd, that matter is ſelf-exiſtent, and that motion is eſſential to it, or that by ſome ſtrange accident, it was, without any external cauſe, one time or other, put in motion. We ſhall notwithſtanding be unable, even upon this conceſſion, to ſhew, how the preſent contrivance and order of things can be accounted for upon the ſole principles of matter and motion. To ſay nothing of the magnificent ſtructure and vaſt extent of the world, or the wonderful variety of objects, that every where preſent themſelves in it. For tho' all theſe conſiderations are arguments of power, and are apt to give ſtrong and lively ideas of it; yet power, however extended, not having ſo evident a connection with thought, whereof I ſtill ſuppoſe matter incapable, as wiſdom and deſign, I have choſe rather to inſiſt on the proof a God, upon the regular and uſeful, than the vaſt fabrick of this material ſyſtem. Tho' what indeed repreſents to us the regularity and uſes of it, naturally leads us to conſider at the ſame time, that almighty power which firſt made, and ſtill continually ſuſtains it in being.

But without a deſign of weakening any arguments, which may be drawn from the viſible effects of the power of God, to prove his exiſtence, what I am more particularly to obſerve from the formation of the world, is, that we ſee in it, and in the ſeveral parts of it, the moſt ſurprizing effects of thought and deep contrivance.

If we take a ſurvey of the mundane ſyſtem in general, what a number of great bodies do we ſee, ſome of them of a magnitude, but of a diſtance too one from another almoſt incredible, yet moving in the moſt exquiſite order, and which is eſtabliſhed by a law, that cannot be broken. Now who was it that appointed this admirable order? Who made the law, whereby it was afterwards to ſubſiſt; and without which the beautiful harmony, that reſults from the motion of the ſeveral orbs, preſerving their proper diſtances, would ſoon have terminated in the greateſt diſcord, and confuſion imaginable.

If we conſider, in particular, the two great luminaries, I ſpeak with the ſcriptures according to appearance and common apprehenſion, but which have certainly the greateſt influence on this terraqueous globe, with what wiſdom are they plac'd in their reſpective ſpheres, how admirably contriv'd are their motions, for the common benefit of all things within the compaſs of their activity, and how regularly do they move?

Now who was it, that made a tabernacle for the ſun in the heavens, among an infinite variety of ſtations, preciſely in the place, the moſt commodious for him, out of which he ſhould appear to *go forth every morning, like a bridegroom out of his chamber*, with new light and joy in his face, *and rejoicing as a giant to run his courſe?* Or who was it again that preſcrib'd him, I argue ſtill upon the common notion, the ſtated times of *his going down*; and who appointed that *the moon* alſo, ſhould ſo exactly *know her ſeaſons?*

If we deſcend from heaven, or a conſideration of the greater conſtituent parts of the world, to take the leaſt view of the human microcoſm, what a freſh and glorious ſcene of wonders immemediately opens itſelf to us? *How fearfully* with reſpect to our bodies *and wonderfully are we made*; and by what ſtrange and admirable laws of mechaniſm do we live and move? And tho' we find by a ſenſible experience, that we have ſome power over matter, to change the figure of it, to tranſpoſe it, or alter the courſe of its motion; yet how unable are we, let us make uſe of all the powers and privileges of thought as much as we can, to compoſe the leaſt part or organ, towards the formation of any animal. How much more unlikely was it, or rather impoſſible, that matter, to which we here allow a power of moving itſelf, ſhould without thought or deſign, have ever been able to compoſe all the organs of the human body together, and, as it were, at one effort, wherein wiſdom and thought diſplay themſelves, in ſuch a vaſt and inexhauſted variety of inſtances.

There is no animal whatever, in the conſtruction whereof we do not obſerve very ſurprizing effects of wiſdom and contrivance; to ſay nothing of the curious formation of trees and plants, and the regular methods of their propagation, their nutriment, and growth; to which all the art and induſtry of man, is ſo far from being capable of producing any thing like, that thoſe who have made the deepeſt reſearches into the works of nature, can upon no mechanical principles whatever, account for any one of theſe appearances.

A perſon would be thought very unreaſonable, who ſhould ſay, that the conſtruction even of a watch, is not owing to the operation

tion or contrivance of ſome artiſt. But what is this poor machine, with all the pomp, we ſometimes obſerve about it, to the mechaniſm, I do not ſay of the moſt inconſiderable inſect, but of a pile of graſs, or a common flower of the field; which, in the judgment of him who made the world, and beſt knows the admirable formation of its ſeveral parts, is more ſplendidly *array'd, than Solomon was in all his glory.*

Now if the world, in the preſent ſtate of it, were produc'd by any caſual motion of the parts of matter, how comes the effect to be ſo much above the character and quality of the cauſe; or what account can be given, that ſo many wonderful inſtances of thought and contrivance ſhould be owing to that, which is neither capable of thinking, or contriving?

THE arguments of *Lactantius* on this head, are propos'd after that clear and elegant manner, wherein he ſo much excells: "We obſerve *, ſays he, nothing in this world, wherein the ſigns of a great and conſummate wiſdom are not viſible; and which being ſo far ſuperior to all human wiſdom and contrivance, to what can we juſtly aſcribe the effects of it, but to the providence of God? Is reaſon and art requir'd to form an image, or the ſtatue of a man, and ſhall we ſuppoſe man himſelf to have been form'd by the caſual motion of certain particles of matter, blindly impelling, or adhering to one another. He adds a little after to the ſame purpoſe: † What reaſonable man can imagine, that an effect, which all the reaſon and deſign in the world is not capable of producing, ſhould be produc'd by an accidental concourſe or combination of undeſigning or ſenſeleſs atoms?

THE force of which reaſoning lies in this, that the effect ought always to bear the ſignatures of the cauſe, and be proportion'd, in ſome meaſure at leaſt, to the power and influence of it; and conſequently that 'tis the higheſt abſurdity to ſuppoſe this regular, uniform, and beautiful ſtate of things, wherein there are ſo many viſible characters of a wiſe and deſigning agent, ſhould ariſe from a principle, which has neither wiſdom nor deſign, but acts at the moſt, if chance may be ſaid to act all, by a blind and neceſſary cauſality; a ſtate of things, in a word, which affords us all the arguments in proof of an intelligent and wiſe cauſe, which could have been afforded us, on ſuppoſition that ſuch a cauſe had really exiſted.

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* *Videmus enim nihil eſſe in omni mundo quod non habeat in ſe maximam mirabilemque ſapientiam. Quæ quia ſupra hominis ſapientiam & ingenium eſt; cui rectius quàm divinæ providentiæ tribuenda eſt? An ſimulacrum hominis & ſtatuam ars fingit, ipſum hominem de fruſtis temere concurrentibus fieri putabimus?* Lactantius de irâ. c. 10.

† *Quiſquamne igitur ſanus exiſtimat, quod homo ratione & conſilio non poſſit, id concurſu atomorum paſſim cohærentium perfici potuiſſe.* Id. ib.

We not only obſerve in the ſtructure and formation of things, the admirable effects of wiſdom and art, but in the ſeveral uſes for which they appear to be contriv'd and form'd in the manner, proper to them.

Every thing in the world, to the formation whereof there ſeems to have been the leaſt intelligence requir'd, has its proper uſe, and is directed to ſome wiſe or good ends, both with reſpect to its own being, and that of the whole ſyſtem; but more particularly as it is ſubſervient to ſuch beings, as border upon it, and with whom it has a nearer communication. This has been ever look'd upon by wiſe and thinking men, as a clear and inconteſtable proof of ſome one original being, the architect of this viſible world, who prepar'd and model'd the ſeveral materials that compoſe it. They juſtly conclude, that without his ſpecial direction and appointment, things could never have fallen into ſo uſeful an order, or been adapted to all thoſe excellent ends, which they ſo duly purſue in general, and every one of them reſpectively in its private ſituation.

Learned men, to create in us a greater idea of the wiſdom of God, in the various uſes for which his creatures were form'd, have enter'd into the * detail of this ſubject, illuſtrated it by a curious induction of particulars, and compos'd whole volumes upon it. But it is not conſiſtent with my deſign to purſue ſuch a method, but only to obſerve ſummarily the proper inference to be drawn from a juſt proſecution of it; which is, that things, in a numberleſs variety of inſtances, fitted to ſo many wiſe and uſeful ends, muſt have deriv'd the powers which were given them towards attaining thoſe ends, from ſome wiſe, informing, and ſuperior being. Otherways we muſt again recur to that inconſiſtent ſuppoſition of an effect without a cauſe; or, which comes to the ſame thing, of a cauſe, altogether impotent towards producing its effect, and unequal to it; and when we ſpeak of intelligent beings, plainly communicating perfections, which it has not in its own nature.

This proof of the exiſtence of God, from an intending cauſe, with regard both to the formation and uſes of things, ought to be the more inſiſted upon, as it lies the moſt open of all other proofs to common apprehenſion; there is no need of much learning or application to diſcover the force of it. The moſt ignorant perſons are capable enough of perceiving, that no effect can exceed

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* *Galen, Theoph. Raynaud. Boyle, Ray, Derham.*

the power of its cauſe, but muſt neceſſarily be in ſome meaſure proportion'd to it.

IT is no leſs obvious, that things in themſelves wholly ſenſeleſs and incogitative, could never have form'd the ſeveral ſpecies of beings in the world, after a manner proper to purſue and attain ſo many excellent ends, and wherein there appear all the characters of a moſt wiſe, and deſigning agent.

BUT becauſe there are two ſpecious arguments of the *Epicureans*, and wherein they ſeem to place their main ſtrength, which may be thought in ſome meaſure to invalidate this proof, I ſhall proceed in the two following chapters diſtinctly to examine the force of them.

CHAP. VII.

The argument of the Epicureans *anſwer'd, againſt the neceſſity of ſuppoſing an intending cauſe from the formation of things.*

AN eternal motion of an infinite variety of atoms, to ſpeak in the perſon of an *Epicurean*, muſt neceſſarily, and ſucceſſively produce every poſſible combination of them. And ſuch an effect is ſo far, whatever it may ſeem, from being merely contingent or fortuitous, that the nature of things requires it ſhould one time or other unavoidably happen

LET us take that very inſtance, which *Grotius* has urg'd, and is commonly urg'd, againſt the poſſibility of this preſent ſyſtem of the world from the caſual motion and concourſe of atoms: Let us ſuppoſe, I ſay, that the letters of the *Roman* alphabet, had been eternally tranſpos'd, or chang'd in their order by ſucceſſive turns, it could not poſſibly have been otherways, but that the *Æneid* muſt upon one conjuncture or other, have been produc'd exactly in the order we now have it. So far upon this ſuppoſition would it be neceſſary to ſuppoſe that work to have been a contrivance of art, that it muſt have been ſome time the reſult of an abſolute, and, if I may ſpeak ſo, mechanical neceſſity itſelf.

THE argument therefore, which learned men have employ'd againſt the *Epicureans*, from the abſurdity of ſuppoſing that a caſual change of letters, ſhould ever produce a rational or well digeſted poem, inſtead of having any force towards ſubverting their principles, rather tends to confirm them by a ſenſible and apt illuſtration. For ſince all ſyſtems, in an infinite duration, muſt one time or other take place, this ſyſtem was neceſſarily to come in courſe ſome time; that period has happen'd at laſt; but 'tis owing to chance, and not to any deſign or contrivance, that it did not happen ſooner, or had not been deferr'd for an incommenſurable duration longer.

IN anſwer to what is thus objected, I ſhall not inſiſt that the eternal motion of matter is here taken for granted, without being prov'd, and, as we have fully evinc'd before, without any poſſibility of proof; yet I now ſuppoſe it, and argue notwithſtanding, that we can never account for the origin of the mundane ſyſtem from it. I ſhall only therefore by way of removing this objection, propoſe the following particulars to be conſider'd. And,

1. IN the firſt place, a caſual combination of atoms, which without an external cauſe or impulſe could never have combin'd, is here precariouſly aſſum'd. For either theſe atoms muſt have mov'd in order to their coming and uniting together in a direct, or in an oblique line. 'Tis moſt reaſonable to ſuppoſe their motion would be in a direct line; where there is nothing to obſtruct or divert a body in motion, we can have no poſſible conception how or by what means the courſe of its motion can be alter'd; but an infinite number of atoms falling continually in ſtrait and parallel lines, as they could never approach nearer to thoſe, which deſcended collaterally with them, ſo neither could they poſſibly overtake thoſe, that fell before them, or be overtaken by any, that follow'd in the ſame column after them; but muſt in both reſpects eternally have kept the ſame order and diſtance, in their reſpective columns. So that they could never touch or cohere; tho' we ſhould farther grant, that they are of a different ſhape and texture, or that their coherence might be clearly explain'd upon natural or mechanical principles; in both which reſpects the *Epicureans* will find themſelves preſs'd with very great difficulties. But ſetting theſe difficulties aſide, they were forc'd however to ſuppoſe *, that the deſcending atoms did not fall in a line truly or mathematically perpendicular, but declin'd a little from it; and the deviation, how ſmall or inconſiderable ſo ever, occaſion'd that concourſe and coherence of them, whereof no account could be otherways given.

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* *Quod niſi declinare ſolerent, omnia deorſum,*
Imbris utì guttæ, caderent per inane profundum,
——*ita nil natura creâſſet.*

Lucret.

BUT this was anſwering one difficulty, whereby they found themſelves embarraſs'd with another: For to aſſert this declination of atoms, either from any occult quality in the nature of them, or from any unknown external cauſe, was notoriouſly to beg the queſtion, and, as *Cicero* * juſtly obſerves, to aſſert a thing, without any reaſon for it; and I may add, contrary to the moſt natural law, we can conceive, of gravitation, that bodies ſhould continue their motion in a direct, rather than an oblique line, unleſs their ſtriking upon other bodies might vary the determination of it. If we once ſuppoſe, that any moving particle of matter may, without an external impulſe, deviate in the leaſt from a ſtrait line, we may with equal reaſon ſuppoſe it to deſcribe any line.

BUT let us allow the *Epicureans*, ſince that is their favourite, tho' a moſt groundleſs fiction, and without which their whole ſcheme falls in pieces, let us allow them, I ſay, to the end their atoms may more eaſily embrace and unite, that their motion is ſomewhat oblique, and bending from a right line; what will they gain by this conceſſion? If all atoms equally decline, they will ſtill be as far from uniting, as they were at firſt; if they do not all equally decline, then the ſuppos'd declination is not eſſential to them. From what accident then, or by whoſe determination, upon the *Epicurean* ſyſtem, can this difference in their motion ariſe? Here again the patrons of that ſyſtem, are forc'd to aſſert, and lay down as a principle, what has no appearance either of reaſon, or probability †.

2. THIS objection ſuppoſes an infinite number of atoms, and yet a void ſpace wherein they move; the whole force indeed of what is objected lies in this ſuppoſition, which notwithſtanding deſtroys the *Epicurean* hypotheſis. For an infinite number of the particles of matter muſt be of infinite extent, otherways we may ſuppoſe a number capable of being added, and filling up thoſe vacant ſpaces, to which they do not extend; which implies a contradiction, and quite enervates all the force of this argument. For if the number of atoms be not infinite, 'tis impoſſible that infinite combinations ſhould follow from them. But if they be according to the *Pleniſts* infinite, and there are no void ſpaces, but what they fill, then 'tis impoſſible, that they ſhould either move, or gravitate at all.

3. THO' we ſhould admit the number of atoms to be infinite, and that infinite combinations of them would neceſſarily one time

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* *Quam declinationem ſine cauſâ fieri ſi minus verbis, re (Epicurus) cogitur confiteri.* Cic. de fato.

† *Nam ſive omnes atomi declinabunt nullæ unquam cohæreſcent; ſive aliæ ſuo nutu rectè ferentur, erit hoc quaſi provincias atomis dare, quæ obliquè ferentur.* Cic. lib. 1. de finibus.

or other follow from the infinite variety of their motions; yet theſe would be only material combinations ſtill. As to thought, which neither does, nor can depend on any modifications of matter, we muſt notwithſtanding derive the origin of it, and conſequently of the nobleſt appearances and effects in nature, from ſome other principle.

CHAP. VIII.

The argument of the Epicureans *anſwer'd, againſt the neceſſity of ſuppoſing an intending cauſe, from the ſeveral uſes of things; with an animadverſion or two upon* des Cartes.

IT is pretended by *Epicurus*, and his followers, that we diſcover many things by accident, and occaſionally, ſubſervient to our uſe, which, it is evident, were not originally, or by any direct intention, deſign'd for it. A man, to avoid the purſuit of his enemies, who thirſt after his blood, climbs a ſhady oak, and, by favour of its covert, finds protection, and eſcapes undiſcover'd. Another obſerving a lion ready to ſeize and devour him, lets himſelf gradually down a craggy and ſteep rock. But will any man ſay, that either the tree, or the rock, were deſignedly plac'd there for theſe ends? The tree with ſo many boughs to cover the one, and the rock with ſo many jagged points for the other to take hold of, and whereby he may preſerve himſelf from falling. As little reaſon, ſay they, is there to ſuppoſe, that the * hands or feet of either of theſe perſons were form'd for the uſes, they make of them, but they find them ſubſervient to thoſe uſes, and accordingly employ them. Thus they argue there is no neceſſity of ſuppoſing, that any member of the body, how curious ſoever in the conſtruction, was intentionally organiz'd, after a manner, proper for ſuch and ſuch uſes; but the uſes were by accident, or obſervation, found out afterwards. The eye, for inſtance, is in general the moſt uſeful organ of all the ſenſes, and which takes in the greateſt variety of objects; yet there was no intention, when the eye was form'd, that a man ſhould ſee with it, but experience diſcovering it to be the proper and delightful inſtrument of ſight, he naturally makes uſe of it to that end.

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* ——*Nil ideo natum eſt in corpore, ut uti*
Poſſemus, ſed quod natum eſt, id procreat uſum.
Lucret.

I have endeavour'd to give this objection againſt what the theiſts argue from the conſideration of final cauſes, all the force whereof it ſeems capable; let us now conſider what proper and and ſatiſfactory anſwer may be given to it.

1. It is no juſt conſequence, that becauſe a thing happens by accident, and in particular caſes to be ſerviceable to ſome end, for which it does not appear to have been deſignedly form'd, that nothing therefore was made or deſign'd for any end. Let us apply this way of reaſoning upon final cauſes to the works of human induſtry or art, and we ſhall eaſily diſcover the weakneſs and inconſequence of it. A man, to carry on ſome reſemblance with the alluſions in the preceding ſection, finding certain empty ſpaces, that were left when the ſcaffolding was remov'd in the walls of his houſe, climbs up the ſides of it, and throws himſelf into one of the upper apartments at a window; there was no intention in the builder of leaving thoſe empty ſpaces to be made uſe of for that purpoſe, neither were the windows fram'd with any ſuch deſign, as they now occaſionally ſerve. Does it therefore follow, that the ſtair-caſe, and all the curious work, wherewith it may perhaps be embelliſh'd, was the effect of mere chance, and not deſignedly plac'd there for the greater convenience of paſſing into the rooms above; or that the window by the ſame caſualty was put into the form and ſituation, which favours the man's paſſage into it, without any intention of its being ſubſervient to other uſeful ends, and to the intromiſſion of air and light. What ſhould we think of a perſon, who could be ſo weak as to argue after this manner; and yet how imperfect and unjuſt is the reſemblance, I do not ſay of a window or a ſtair-caſe, but of all the moſt curious and elaborate productions of human art put together, to any organical part of the leaſt inſect. If perhaps the ſmallneſs of it do not render the ſtructure of its organs ſtill in proportion the greater object of admiration.

2. It muſt be acknowledg'd then, there is a wide difference between an occaſional uſe to be made of any thing, and its having a conſtant, regular, and peculiar aptitude for ſuch a uſe. But this argument holds ſtill the ſtronger, when ſuch a thing conſiſts, as all the organs in the body of an animal do, of great variety of parts curiouſly united, and acting in ſo harmonious a concert, and mutual a dependance on one another, that the want or diſlocation of one part, might occaſion a general diſorder, or perhaps diſuſe of the whole.

3. BUT the inference, we would draw from the proof of an intending cauſe, from organiz'd bodies, is ſtill more evident, when we obſerve the like conſtruction and uſe of any organ, of the eye, for inſtance, in a great variety of animals different in kind, and in every one of the ſame kind. And yet the wiſdom of God in the formation of things is farther conſpicuous, if we conſider, that their ſeveral organs do not only perform the proper functions aſſign'd them taken ſeparately; but are admirably ſubſervient to one another, towards the preſervation of the ſyſtem in general, and the common uſes reſulting from it. *For the body is not one member, but many; and the eye cannot ſay unto the hand, I have no need of thee, nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you* *.

WHAT the *Epicureans* urge, that things muſt of neceſſity be in order of time before their uſes, does not in the leaſt tend to invalidate what has been ſaid. The eye, ſay they, for example, muſt be before ſeeing, and the ear before hearing; as in reſpect of artificial things, there were ſwords and ſpears before men could fight with them, and beds before men could repoſe themſelves upon them. But this very argument, which *Lucretius* brings againſt the proofs we would draw from final cauſes, directly concludes for them. For if inſtruments of war were made for preſervation or offence, then the uſe of them was intended before they were made. As if beds were contriv'd, that men might with greater eaſe compoſe themſelves to reſt, the uſe of them muſt however be preſum'd tho' laſt in the execution, yet to have been antecedently in the intention.

A modern philoſopher † therefore, who thought it below a genius applying himſelf to the conſideration of phyſical cauſes, to have recourſe to final cauſes for a ſolution of them; finding himſelf preſs'd with the arguments we have mention'd in proof of an intending agent, would divert us from employing it by a falſe ſhew of modeſty. He apprehends that it would be the higheſt degree of temerity in him to enquire into thoſe ends, upon which the ſupreme being may be induc'd to act; and that we ought not to be guilty of ſo great arrogance as to ſuppoſe our ſelves in the ſecret of his deſigns.

THIS pretence, tho' it carries an appearance of that high veneration man's intellect owes to God, yet, as the true reaſon is frequently of all others moſt oppoſite to the pretended, was at the bottom really founded in the regard he entertain'd, and was ambitious the reſt of the world ſhould entertain, for his own ſyſtem.

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* 1 *Cor.* 12. 14, 21.

† *Des Cartes.*

For conceiving, that all the phænomena in nature might be accounted for from the mechanical laws of motion, he thought that to admit final cauſes, would be altogether unneceſſary, and at the ſame time derogate from the glory of his invention.

But in anſwer to this plea of modeſty, I ſhall take an occaſion to offer the two following conſiderations.

1. That a diſcovery of the wiſe ends of God in the works of creation, ſo far as we are able to diſcover them, tends to fill our minds with the greater awe and admiration of him. We ought not, indeed, to imagine our ſelves capable of finding out the almighty to perfection, or qualify'd after our moſt curious and elaborate reſearches, to delineate all the uſes, for which his creatures, in the different formation of them, are deſign'd: Yet where the uſes of them in general, or of any of them, is viſible and evident; uſes, that cannot be ſuppos'd to proceed from chance or accident, but from a regular and form'd intention, ſo far we may not only, with all humility, aſcribe their original to the eternal power and godhead, but are oblig'd to do it, by all the rules of piety, in honour to them.

2. Besides the reaſon of the thing to juſtify us in our diſquiſitions upon the ſubject of final cauſes, we have the example of holy men to authorize them; who were far, in their divine converſations with God on this head, from deſigning any thing injurious to his infinite wiſdom and ſovereignty. The royal prophet, in ſeveral paſſages of the Pſalms, takes occaſion to celebrate the praiſes of God, and to raiſe in himſelf and others a juſt admiration of his works, both from the admirable ends, for which they were deſign'd in the moſt conſpicuous parts of them, and that have the moſt general influence, as the ſun, moon, and ſtars, the earth, and the ſeas, and, in particular, from the wonderful ſtructure of a human body. And in the book of *Job*, to which I may add that of the wiſdom of *Solomon*, tho' conſider'd only as a human compoſition, there are ſome of the nobleſt ſtrains of devotion, that could ever enter into the heart of man, occaſion'd by the like reflections.

It will be to no purpoſe to ſay, that the caſe of mere philoſophers in judging concerning the ends of God, in the things he has made, is very different from that of men, who write by divine inſpiration; becauſe thoſe very uſes in the works of God, which the inſpired penmen have obſerv'd, are the ſame, which the light of reaſon and natural principles of philoſophy, have moſt generally and evidently diſcover'd.

CHAP. IX.

The proof of a God from the idea of a being, that has all poſſible perfection.

LEARNED men [*], who have not thought fit to inſiſt on this proof, but wav'd the proſecution of it, as being of too nice, and ſubtle a contexture, yet have allow'd it to be of great weight, and, for any thing they know, certainly concluſive. Dr. *Cudworth* [†], in his *intellectual ſyſtem*, has indeed conſider'd more particularly what may be ſaid againſt this proof and for it; and having impartially ſtated the arguments on both ſides, determines in the ſequel for its validity, and upon reaſons which appear to be very well founded. Yet in the progreſs of his enquirie upon this article [‡], he expreſſes himſelf ſometimes after a more diffident manner, and inſinuates, that the proof of the exiſtence of God, from the idea of a being, who has all poſſible perfection, cannot be expected to have any great or general effect towards the conviction of unbelievers.

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[*] Man accuſtom'd to meditate on metaphyſical truths, and to trace up things to their firſt principles, may know the Deity, by its idea. And I own, that's a ſure way to arrive at the ſource of all truth. But the more direct and ſhort that way is, the more difficult and unpaſſable it is for the generality of mankind, who depend on their ſenſes and imagination. *Archbiſhop of* Cambray's *demonſtration of the exiſtence of God*, p. 2.

The arguments drawn from hence, *(the idea of God)* tho' in themſelves perhaps certain, to ſeveral perſons convincing, and not to be diſprov'd by any, do not fit every underſtanding, nor have that regular, uniform face of truth, which takes at firſt ſight, as well as pleaſes after farther examination. Only thus much I ſhall alledge in their defence, that the greateſt and commoneſt objection made againſt this kind of proof, is very ill grounded.

It is not true, that whatever is poſſible, or whatever we have any idea of, for that reaſon actually is; and therefore 'tis urg'd that the actual exiſtence of a God, does by no means follow from the poſſibility or conception of ſuch a being. But then it is anſwer'd, that the concluſion may and does hold in this caſe, and in no other caſe whatever, becauſe conception ſuppoſes poſſibility, and poſſibility a correſpondent power; and a power of exiſting, when apply'd to God, muſt neceſſarily infer actual exiſtence. But the unuſual niceneſs of ſuch a proof as this being likely to raiſe ſome prejudice againſt it, I ſhall wave the proſecution of it. *Biſhop* Gaſtrel'*s certainty and neceſſity of religion in general*, p. 23, 24.

I do not mean to ſay poſitively, that the argument drawn from our including ſelf-exiſtence in the idea of God, or our comprehending it in the definition or notion we frame of him, is wholly inconcluſive or ineffectual to prove his actual exiſtence; poſſibly by a very nice and accurate deduction, it may be found to be a very ſatisfactory proof. But that it is not a clear and obvious demonſtration, fitted to convince and put the atheiſt to ſilence, appears from the endleſs diſputes maintain'd by learned men concerning it, without being able to ſatisfy each other, on either ſide of the queſtion. *Dr.* Clark'*s demonſtration of the being and attributes of God*, p. 37, 38.

[†] P. 721.

[*] However it is not very probable, that many atheiſts will be convinc'd thereby, but that they will rather be ready to ſay, this is no probation at all of a Deity, but only an affirmation of the thing in diſpute, and a mere begging of the queſtion, that therefore God is, becauſe he is, or cannot but be. *Ib.* p. 724.

But why are we afraid of employing an argument in proof of a God, which we really believe to be good in itſelf? If ſome unbelievers will not examine or attend to the force of this argument, we may poſſibly find others in a better diſpoſition; or if, after all, there are a great number of men atheiſtically inclin'd, who are not well capable of comprehending it, others may be more capable. Atheiſm does not always proceed, tho' generally it does, from want of a good capacity; reaſons of vanity or diſcontent, a ſceptical temper, a ſtrong, lively, and copious imagination, which furniſhes a man with ſpecious appearances of probability for every thing, have often a great influence towards perverting his judgment; which yet do not render him altogether incorrigible, when the light of truth is clearly diſplay'd before him. Were it a rule to us to make uſe of no arguments, but what every man has either liberty of mind to conſider, or ſtrength of mind diſtinctly to conceive, we muſt argue in a narrow compaſs indeed, and upon very few principles.

But to ſpeak to the argument itſelf; every man of common apprehenſion is capable of underſtanding what we mean, when we uſe the term perfection, and of forming in his mind, the idea of a being that has all the perfection, any being can have. There is no manner of difficulty, or repugnancy to the natural order of our ideas, in conceiving, that what may poſſibly be, may be. There is no truth in the world, whereof the mind has a more clear, certain, and diſtinct perception. The queſtion is, whether the bare idea of ſuch a being, does really and neceſſarily infer his exiſtence? That it does infer his exiſtence, we argue after this manner: Since the mind has not a power of creating its own object, we can have no idea of any thing, but what has either an actual, or at leaſt a poſſible exiſtence; a being that has all the perfection, any being is capable of, cannot have any future poſſible exiſtence, for that would evidently deſtroy two of the primary attributes included in the idea of it, independency and ſelf-exiſtence. Neither for the ſame reaſon could it ever have had in any time paſt a poſſible exiſtence; and therefore muſt either actually exiſt, or elſe could never have had, nor ever can have any poſſibility of exiſting.

Now how come we by the idea of that which neither is, nor, if it be not, can ever poſſibly have a being? If we conſider the powers of our mind; tho' we are capable of forming ideas, concerning a great many things, that do not really exiſt, and may never have any exiſtence hereafter; yet we are not able to form an idea of any one thing, which in the nature of it implies a contradiction,

diction, or a direct repugnancy to exiſtence. And yet if according to our idea of a being, that has all poſſible perfection, ſuch a being does not actually exiſt, it implies a plain contradiction, to ſuppoſe that it ever ſhould exiſt, or could ever have exiſted; and conſequently in this particular caſe, the mind of man will have a greater power of creating its object, than the divine mind itſelf, whoſe ideas muſt be ſuppos'd to have ſome objective reality, or at leaſt cannot poſſibly extend to repreſent ſuch things, as are in the nature of them contradictory, and impoſſible.

LET us try and exert all the force of our intellectual powers; let us excite in our minds the moſt extravagant and chimerical images, and then let us diſcover, if we can, any one of them, that has not ſome exemplary cauſe, ſimple or compounded, or which implies in it a direct, and viſible repugnancy to exiſtence. I am ſatisfy'd, that a mind impregnated with the moſt lively and fertile imagination, can never produce any ſuch idea. What account then can be given concerning the origin of an idea, one of the moſt clear and diſtinct of all others, which yet has no real foundation, nor can poſſibly have any? Can it be ſuppos'd, if the ſuppoſition may be made with reverence, that what we call the moſt perfect being, ſhould be the only chimera in the intellectual ſyſtem; or that we ſhould without any poſſible foundation, have a power of creating the idea of a being endow'd with all the perfection, any being can have, and yet are not able to form, at the ſame time, the moſt imperfect or irregular idea, without ſome exemplary object or other? Is it not more reaſonable to conclude, that an idea which exhibits the moſt perfect being poſſible to the mind, has the moſt ſolid, the moſt certain, and real foundation without the mind; and that the truth of the object, ſhould be neceſſarily imply'd and contain'd in that of the ſubject.

THE ſum of what has been here ſaid, is this, that whatever elſe we may conceive poſſible, tho' it does not for that reaſon actually exiſt, yet when the mind forms to itſelf the idea of a being, that has all poſſible perfection, the conception of ſuch a being neceſſarily infers the actual exiſtence of it; becauſe the power of exiſting hereafter, or of having exiſted in time, when apply'd to ſuch a being, deſtroys the nature, and is wholly inconſiſtent with the idea of it; or elſe it muſt be pretended, that the mind of man has a power of making its own object, a power ſuperior to that of the creator himſelf, not only out of nothing, but out of that which can have no poſſibility of being.

BUT can we then have no idea of any being, but what either actually exiſts, or will exiſt one time or other? We do not ſay ſo; the mind of man is a continual ſpring of invention, and by the help and power of his imagination forms to itſelf a thouſand extravagant ſuppoſitions of things, that never were, or will be, and ſometimes perhaps carries him even into new worlds, compos'd of realities and fictions. But ſtill the imagination muſt have ſome materials to work with, and which furniſh the ſubject of our ideas by way of alluſion to things that really exiſt, or compoſition out of them, and which imply at leaſt no neceſſary repugnance to exiſtence; as the idea of a being, which has all poſſible perfection evidently does, if ſuch a being do not actually exiſt. Beſides, there is this wide difference between the idea of a moſt perfect being, and any chimerical idea, of a golden mountain, for inſtance, which the mind is capable of forming; that in the latter caſe, we can eaſily ſeparate the idea from the actual exiſtence of the thing; nay, we can ſcarce poſſibly ſuppoſe them in fact united; but when we try to ſeparate the idea of a being, that has all the perfection, whereof any being is capable from the actual exiſtence of it, we attempt an abſolute impoſſibility, and what upon our own ſuppoſition, is altogether inconſiſtent.

AND this conſideration enables us to obviate what may be farther ſaid to invalidate the preſent argument; that it extends only to the nominal idea * of a moſt perfect being, but does not with an evidence ſufficiently clear, diſcover to us the neceſſary connection, between the idea of ſuch a being, and the neceſſity of its actual exiſtence. Now whatever foundation there may be for the diſtinction of a nominal idea on other accounts; yet there can be no pretence for it here, the idea being inſeparably connected with the actual exiſtence of its object, and not poſſibly capable of being remov'd from it. Tho' the actual exiſtence therefore of other things does not follow from the poſſibility of their exiſting; yet to ſeparate the idea of a moſt perfect being, from that of actual exiſtence, is to ſuppoſe a being to be ſelf-exiſtent, and not ſelf-exiſtent, to have all poſſible perfection, and not to have all poſſible perfection, at the ſame time.

THOSE very perſons who do not allow, that this argument directly concludes for the exiſtence of God, yet will grant, it evidently proves the poſſibility of his exiſting; or that it implies no repugnancy in the nature of things, but that the being we call God, and to whom we attribute all perfections poſſible, might have exiſted: We argue, on the other hand, that if this idea have any exemplary cauſe, and without ſome exemplary cauſe, we can have no idea, the being which is here granted poſſible, muſt eternally have exiſted; otherways he never could have exiſted; for a poſſible

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* *Dr.* Clark's *Demonſtr.* p. 38.

ble or contingent exiſtence deſtroys the very nature and foundation of ſuch an idea.

YET I am ſenſible many learned men, and of great penetration, do not admit the validity of this proof; and even ſome of thoſe, who have produc'd arguments for it, which they have been unable to give any clear, or obvious ſolutions to. But certainly, 'tis very reaſonable to employ ſuch arguments in proof of any thing, as can be propos'd with perſpicuity, or are not capable of being diſprov'd. Tho', after all, perhaps, it is not the obſcurity, but the plainneſs and ſimplicity of this argument, from the idea of God, that renders ſome perſons leſs diſpos'd to yield their aſſent to it. The proof of a God having been for a long time commonly made out by a gradual and learned deduction of conſequences, men were ſurpriz'd to find it at laſt deduc'd to a ſimple propoſition or two, and leſs forward to believe it clearly included in them.

CHAP. X.

Whether the exiſtence of God may be prov'd from general conſent?

IT has been commonly urg'd, that ſince there is no aſſignable period of time, no known community, or nation of men in the world, wherein the belief of a God has not been univerſally profeſs'd; but perſons of the moſt different capacities, tempers, and intereſts, have indifferently agreed in ſuch a belief, therefore his being may very juſtly be concluded from it. For tho' men may be deceiv'd, in the judgment they make, how general ſoever, concerning things, which are the objects of ſenſe and imagination; yet if in their way of reaſoning upon any ſubject, a univerſal error ſhould ſpread itſelf over their minds, and they ſhould all concur in drawing a falſe concluſion; or if there be no truth in the appearance of a thing, whereof there is the moſt evident, for otherways how could it be the moſt univerſal perception in the mind, then there is an end of all reaſoning among men. For why ſhould any one be oblig'd to ſubmit to our way of arguing in any caſe, if our faculties are ſo contriv'd, as to deceive us in ſo very plain a caſe, that there is no man really capable of denying, or with-holding his aſſent to it? Or if there have been ſome perſons, who pretended to diſſent from the common belief, their pretence was merely fictitious, not proceeding from any reaſonable or internal conviction in their own minds, concerning the falſhood of this belief, but from ſome ſiniſter motive of vanity, affectation, or perhaps an implacable rage occaſion'd by diſappointment, and ſtimulated by the deſire of revenge: Neither, if it ſhould be granted, that there are in fact ſpeculative atheiſts, would the conceſſion deſtroy the univerſality of this belief, becauſe they may be conſider'd either as under ſome great diſorder of mind, or ſuch violent prejudices, as may hinder them from attending to the proofs, upon which it is evidently founded, whenever men are in a temper to examine them with attention.

It is queſtion'd farther, what can be the cauſe, if it be erroneous, of ſo univerſal a conſent? A conſent, not ariſing from the reports of ſenſe, like that, upon which the ſun and moon are ſuppos'd not to be much greater in themſelves, than in their appearance to the eye, but from the common principles of reaſon. Where there is a general agreement in the perception, one would think, there ſhould be an uniformity in the appearance anſwerable to it. To which it is added, that the arguments, whereby we prove the exiſtence of God, and which are to be look'd upon as the common foundation of this aſſent, have been, in a manner, among all people, and in all ages, the ſame; but ſo convincing withal, that they could never be diſprov'd, as certain errors have been at length, which yet for ſome time ſpread themſelves very wide, and generally obtain'd.

Here is the ſubſtance of thoſe arguments, upon which men would infer the exiſtence of God from general conſent. And 'tis certain, they clearly prove, that this principle, out of reſpect to the common ſenſe and reaſon of mankind, muſt be admitted at leaſt, in a very high degree probable; but whether they ſufficiently demonſtrate the truth of it, has been much doubted; becauſe they ſeem only to conclude with reſpect to ſuch perſons, as have apply'd themſelves to reaſon diſtinctly upon the exiſtence of God, and not with reſpect to thoſe, who have believ'd it implicitly, and without enquiring into the grounds or reaſons of it. Suppoſing then, the conſent of mankind in the belief of a God univerſal, yet it will not follow, as was urg'd in the firſt place, that if there be no God, men are therefore under one univerſal deluſion or miſtake in their way of reaſoning, and that there is an end of all reaſoning at once; becauſe a great number of thoſe, if not a far greater number, who concur in this principle, do not aſſent to it, from any explicit principles of reaſon, but from other accidental and foreign motives. It is probable there may be an infinite number of ignorant people, who never ſo much as once examin'd in any diſtinct manner, the reaſons of this perſuaſion; and our belief of any thing, without examination, how true or reaſonable ſoever in itſelf, yet cannot be call'd a reaſonable belief; and conſequently we can draw no arguments in prejudice to the common uſe of reaſon among men from it.

As to the queſtion, concerning the particular cauſes of this belief, and how it came to be ſo univerſal, if not founded in evident and inconteſtable reaſons, it is farther ſaid, that, beſides the prejudice of education, and the authority of thoſe, under whoſe direction the underſtandings of men are firſt open'd or cultivated, one general, and, of all others, the moſt powerful cauſe, and the moſt apt to bribe the judgment, may be aſſign'd, for the univerſality of this belief, and that is, intereſt. For what a miſerable ſtate of things ſhould we be in, were there no God to preſide in the government, or to rectify the diſorders of this world. When we obſerve, to ſay nothing of the other calamities and vexations of human life, the unequal events in it to mankind; when we ſee, on one hand, the triumphs of folly and injuſtice, and the oppreſſion of virtue and innocence, on the other; who, without the belief of a God, and the natural conſequences of it, could have the patience one moment to breath the air of ſo corrupt a world? Yet the evils which can neither be prevented nor redreſs'd in this life, are not the only evils, which the atheiſt has to fear. For tho' 'tis generally ſuppos'd upon the principles of atheiſm, that the ſoul dies with the body, or, upon the diſſolution of it, *vaniſhes as the ſoft air* [*]; nevertheleſs if thought be nothing, but the reſult of matter and motion, how is it poſſible for the atheiſt to know, but that the ſubtle particles of matter, which now diſcharge the functions of thought in him, may, when the groſſer parts of his body are diſſolv'd, ſtill ſubſiſt, and operate in ſome proper vehicle? What ſhould hinder us, I ſay, from believing, that the corpuſcles which now form our thoughts in the brain, may form them in ſome other ſyſtem, and be capable of pain or ſuffering from the force of other agents acting upon it? And if this be admitted, none certainly have greater reaſon to fear the power of devils, than thoſe who deny the being of God.

IF in a ſtate, where the beſt rules of life are preſcrib'd, and ordinarily good laws obtain for the adminiſtration of civil government, there is ſo much violence and diſorder, what has the atheiſt to hope, when he paſſes into a ſtate, where, for any thing he knows, there is neither moral nor civil law of any ſtanding obligation, but a brutal and arbitrary force every where reigns; or, in the language of the book of wiſdom, where *ſtrength is the* only *law of juſtice, and that which is feeble is found to be nothing worth* *.

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[*] *Wiſd.* 2. 3.

IT is impoſſible that a man, who does not believe a God, can be ſecure from any natural principles, that his ſoul ſhall not ſurvive his body, or that death is any more than a ſtate of ſeparation, which does not deſtroy the ſoul, but only puts an end to the communication betwixt it and the body. But it does not therefore follow, that it may not have a communication with other bodies, or other beings, to the impreſſions whereof it may be more ſenſible, than to any thing capable of acting upon it in this world.

WE have no certain arguments then upon the principles of atheiſm, againſt a future ſtate, or for the extinction of thought after death: And if we ſhall think in another ſtate, what aſſurance can we have, that the ſame paſſions will not reign in it, and even fortify'd perhaps with greater power and malice, than in this world? Why ſhould the earth be thought the only ſcene of violence and cruelty, and wherein they are exercis'd by intelligent beings? The atheiſt certainly, who hopes to find a ſecure retreat in death, has yet, upon this conſideration, greater cauſe to be afraid of dying, than he, who believes a juſt, wiſe, and a good God, and *commits himſelf to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator*.

HERE then, ſay they, who oppoſe the argument for the exiſtence of God, from univerſal conſent, we are able to aſſign a cauſe for ſuch conſent of the moſt univerſal influence; but which does not ſo much prove, that God really exiſts, as that it is for the happineſs of mankind in common, and of every man who duly conſults his own happineſs, in particular, that he ſhould exiſt.

THE force of inclination and intereſt, towards corrupting the judgment of men in other caſes, is very viſible: Every man that conſults himſelf upon this article, will diſcover that the reflection I here make, however reproachful to human nature, is not without grounds; we ſometimes obſerve, even in publick ſocieties, that the moſt abſurd doctrines, are not only in general, and almoſt univerſally aſſented to, but very clear truths of morality, and maxims of civil juſtice openly exploded, and decry'd.

IF it be ſaid, notwithſtanding the great corruption among men in this reſpect, there are ſtill ſome perſons, who preſerve themſelves from the general contagion, and retain a due force and liberty of mind; and who, without any partial or ſiniſter regards, judge of things by the pure light and principles of reaſon; I anſwer, that my deſign is to ſhew, not that intereſt is the only cauſe of inducing the general belief of a God; but that it may contribute very much towards it among other cauſes; whereby men may be differently affected, according to their different tempers, or a different method of education; and that conſequently, it does not ſeem neceſſary, that the common conſent of mankind in the belief of a God, ſhould proceed from one common principle of reaſon, but from one or more of thoſe cauſes.

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* *Wiſd.* 2. 2.

WHEREAS it was urg'd in the laſt place, that the arguments to prove the exiſtence of God, and from which the univerſal conſent of mankind in the belief of it is ſuppos'd to ariſe, have been in a manner at all times the ſame, and never yet capable, like ſeveral errors, which have ſpread themſelves very wide, of being diſprov'd; thoſe, who are not very much inclin'd to aſſent to this way of arguing, will reply, that it does not follow, but that a very probable opinion, which has never been diſprov'd, may notwithſtanding ſome time, or upon one occaſion or other be diſprov'd: So that, to conclude this enquiry, inſtead of urging the general conſent of mankind in direct proof of a deity, it ſhould rather perhaps be ſaid, that the moſt penetrating and wiſeſt of men, who have employ'd their thoughts concerning the nature and origin of things, ever agreed in acknowledging the being of God, therefore 'tis reaſonable to believe there is a God; tho', after all, this is only a remote and conſequential proof of his exiſtence, which previouſly ſuppoſes the other proofs of it well-founded; and ſeems indeed to owe all its force and evidence to them.

CHAP. XI.

Whether we have any innate idea of God?

IF God has impreſs'd any certain character of himſelf on the ſoul of man, we ſhould have nothing to do towards rendring him ſenſible of ſuch an impreſſion, but to make him attend to it. For, tho' it does not neceſſarily follow, as we have obſerv'd before, that upon ſuppoſition of innate ideas, they ſhould actually at all times appear in their full light and evidence; yet whenever the exemplary cauſe of them is preſented to the mind, they will naturally, and of courſe, open themſelves in it. The difficulty then lies in proving, that there are really, and in fact, any ſuch ideas. For if, ſay they, who oppoſe all innate ideas, we conſider the progreſs which the underſtanding makes in the diſcovery and knowledge of things, we ſhall find that we have no ideas of any thing, but from the report of the ſenſes, or by occaſion of certain hints and images, which ariſe from them. The moſt abſtract and univerſal terms have, with them, a ſenſible foundation, in one ſubject or other, out of which they are form'd. The very names of virtue and vice convey ſuch notices to the mind, as they think, have a very great reſemblance to the objects of ſenſe, and are occaſionally at leaſt produc'd by them. For what is the idea of virtue *, but the idea of order, or of ſomething made up, and connected after a uniform and beautiful manner, taken from the obſervations, we make on the regular ſtructure of any natural or artificial work, and the pleaſure, wherewith the regularity of it is apt to affect the mind. What does vice again import but confuſion and diſorder, attended with a certain deformity ungrateful to the perception; as when we ſee any thing out of its proper place or function, any member of the body, for inſtance, diſlocated or mortify'd, the mind naturally feels a ſenſation diſagreeable and uneaſy to it. From the like reſemblance, they ſuppoſe, that the origin of all our other ideas, how abſtract ſoever, may be accounted for; and if we can have no idea, but from ſuch an original, then they conclude, we cannot properly have any innate ideas.

THIS is not a place to examine the queſtion diſtinctly, whether there be any innate ideas, of any kind whatever, in the mind of man; neither does it ſeem of any great importance in theology, to come to a determination about this queſtion; becauſe all the ends of religion, however we determine it, are equally preſerv'd; it is the ſame thing, as to the duties of love and obedience to God, whether he diſcover himſelf to us, by an immediate impreſſion, or by the mediation of the ſenſes, and in conſequence of thoſe admirable laws of union, which he has eſtabliſh'd between the body and the ſoul; yet ſo far I may adventure to ſay, that tho' the ſenſes ſhould by virtue of thoſe laws, be at preſent the occaſional cauſe of all our ideas, this is not owing to any natural, or indeed poſſible connection in the reaſon of the thing, between our ſenſes and our ideas, but merely to the poſitive will of God;

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* The idea of virtue, if it have any ſenſible foundation, ſeems rather to ariſe from the idea of order, than, according to Mr. *Lock*, of praiſe or diſpraiſe. For neither of theſe can be the primary, but only the conſequential rule of it. Nay, this rule is often in each reſpect falſe, virtue is many times decry'd, and vice applauded; tho', admitting it in both reſpects a true rule, it does not make, but antecedently ſuppoſe the difference between virtue and vice.

who may therefore, if he pleaſes, by one general law *, impreſs an idea of his exiſtence, in the minds of all men. For if our ideas may ariſe by occaſion of a cauſe, which has no proper efficiency to produce them, and wherewith they cannot poſſibly have any immediate communication, why may not God, without ſuch occaſional cauſe, immediately produce in the mind any idea?

THE poſſibility of the thing cannot be diſputed; and if God in any caſe ſhould employ a power to this end, there is the greateſt probability that he ſhould do it, in order to a more univerſal, more clear and certain eſtabliſhment of that fundamental article of all religion, and the ground of all homage and obedience to him, his own exiſtence.

BUT becauſe 'tis uncertain, whether God has in fact taken this method of making himſelf known to his creatures, and of ſetting ſuch a ſignature of his divinity upon them, as might be clearly viſible to every one of them, I have choſen to propoſe this argument concerning the innate idea of him, rather in a problematical, than in a deciſive manner.

IF it be pretended, after all, that the queſtion, whether there be any innate idea of God, is altogether groundleſs, becauſe all perſons are not conſcious to themſelves of ſuch an idea; I anſwer, it does not follow from our granting any idea to be innate, that it can never therefore be obſcur'd or defac'd, or that men muſt always be ſuppos'd to attend actually to it. For why may not an idea, which we receive by immediate impreſſion, as well lie dormant in the memory, or be in time wholly extinct, as an idea, which we receive by occaſion of the ſenſes; ſince the mind cannot diſtinctly take in all its objects at once, or through ſome accidental defect, and perhaps in certain obdurate perſons, a judicial blindneſs, may loſe the remembrance of ſuch ideas, which it has formerly been conſcious of.

SHOULD it be ask'd farther, what is the preciſe time when this idea is impreſs'd on the mind, and begins to diſcloſe itſelf; this, we ſay, is only a queſtion as to a circumſtance of the thing, which does not affect the truth or probability of the thing itſelf. We may as pertinently ask, what is the preciſe time of our age, when firſt we begin to diſtinguiſh between good and evil, or are accountable as moral agents, for our actions. Poſſibly there may be no determinate period in either caſe, but what depends on our

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* It is the more reaſonable to believe ſuch an impreſſion, if what Mr. *Lock* ſays be true, "that we have the knowledge of all things without us, except only of God, by "our ſenſes.

different capacities, or certain laws and conditions of human nature, which it does not concern us to know; tho' what has been here obſerv'd, is not intended ſo much to prove, that we have any innate idea of God, as to ſhew, that the opinion of thoſe, who contend for ſuch an idea, cannot be eaſily refuted by the common arguments produc'd againſt it.

SPECU-

SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

BOOK I.
Of the Exiſtence and Attributes of GOD.

PART II.
Of the Attributes of GOD.

CHAP. I.
Of the divine attributes in general.

HAVING prov'd, that there is an all perfect being, the cauſe of all other beings, and of every perfection, wherewith they are endow'd, it remains to be conſider'd, what thoſe attributes are in particular, which are contain'd in the idea of ſuch a being, or can be clearly conceiv'd to belong to him. But before we proceed to a diſtinct enumeration of thoſe attributes, it may be proper to premiſe, that we are not to ſuppoſe our ſelves capable, after the ſtricteſt enquiry and application, of forming adequate ideas concerning them; this being, in the nature of it, impoſſible, from the infinite diſproportion between the faculty and the object. But we may notwithſtanding have clear and diſtinct ideas of many things, whereof our minds cannot fully take in the whole meaſure and extent. As a man may diſtinctly conceive what we mean by a triangle, without being able to diſcover all the relations and properties of it, or to ſolve all the difficulties, that conſequently may ariſe from thoſe properties of it, which he knows already, and perhaps can demonſtrate to others.

When we have once eſtabliſh'd a truth upon certain and undeniable principles, it ſtill remains a truth, how ſtrong and ſpecious ſoever the objections may appear, which are brought againſt it. There is not a more clear and inconteſtable truth in the world, than that ſomething has been from all eternity; there is no reaſoning with any perſon who will deny this; for it is plain, as the reaſon of man can make any thing, that if there had not been ſomething eternally, there never could have been any thing: And yet there are difficulties in the idea of eternity, which the wit of man perhaps will never be able perfectly to account for or remove. But theſe difficulties ariſing from the defect of our capacities, and the improper manner of our apprehending what is eternal by way of ſucceſſive duration, are accidental to the nature of the thing itſelf, and by no means to be admitted againſt the acknowledg'd truth and certainty of it.

The like rule is to be obſerv'd with reſpect to all the divine attributes; we cannot find any of them out to perfection; nay, the nearer we endeavour to approach them, the more inacceſſible they appear, and the farther we always apprehend our ſelves diſtant from them. But we ought not for that reaſon to give over our diſquiſitions after them; ſince the pleaſure and advantage wherewith they are rewarded, do more than compenſate for all the pains of our attention and reſearches. This made holy *Job*, under the greateſt conflicts of mind and bodily ſufferings, expreſs ſo ſtrong a deſire ſtill of purſuing his enquiries concerning the divine nature and perfections; *ſurely I would ſpeak to the almighty*; *and I deſire to reaſon with God.*

What I would farther premiſe in general, concerning the divine attributes, is, that they are not to be conſider'd as having really any ſeparate or diſtinct ſubſiſtence in the divine nature, but only in our manner of conceiving them, according to their different, and external operations. Thus, when God puniſhes, we conſider his act as an act of juſtice; when he pardons, as an act of mercy; and when he promiſes, as an act of goodneſs. And yet we are not to conſider his juſtice, mercy, or goodneſs, as flowing from ſo many principles really diſtinct in him, but from one pure, ſimple, and undivided principle. To illuſtrate which by a ſenſible, tho', for that reaſon, a very inadequate alluſion, it may be ſaid, that the ſame heat of the ſun has a power of ſoftening or melting certain bodies, while it hardens others, or that the ſame light according to the different contexture or ſite of the object, repreſents different colours, and in great variety, to the eye. Allowing for the inequality of ſuch compariſons, the ſeveral attributes of God are one individual eſſence, operating after a different manner, according to the different nature or circumſtances of the ſubject, upon which they operate.

IN our ſelves, becauſe we are limited creatures, and compounded of parts, there are indeed certain powers and faculties really diſtinct from one another, and from our own eſſence; ſo that what we do, admits of a ſeparate conſideration from what we are. The motion of the hand is really diſtinct from the reaſoning powers of the mind, and it is not eſſential to our being, but merely accidental to the better or more commodious ſtate of it, that the hand ſhould move upon ſuch and ſuch particular occaſions. But in God there can be no inherent powers or faculties formally diſtinct from one another, or from himſelf; to ſuppoſe ſuch a diſtinction, would be to deſtroy the perfect ſimplicity and unity of his nature, and infer a ſort of compoſition in it, which, for reaſons that need not be repeated, an all perfect being muſt be ſuppos'd abſolutely incapable of.

BUT does not the mind then err, and impoſe upon us by conceiving diſtinct attributes in God, which yet are not really diſtinct? And conſequently, when we ſee, or rather, when we believe, that we ſee theſe attributes, we, in truth, ſee nothing, but only fictions and creatures of our own imagination. To this it is anſwer'd, that things may be virtually diſtinguiſh'd, which have a power of producing diſtinct effects, or which contain in them a principle of diſtinct actions; tho' that principle, conſider'd ſubjectively, be one, and numerically the ſame. The ideas therefore in our mind concerning ſeveral diſtinct attributes of God, tho' not formally contain'd in the ſubject, have at leaſt an objective reality in that diverſity of his operations, and are evidently founded in diſtinct and ſenſible effects.

Now ſince the mind cannot clearly or diſtinctly ſee any thing, but what has ſome real foundation, where there is matter for clear and diſtinct conceptions in it, there muſt be eminently and virtually, tho' 'tis not neceſſary there ſhould be ſo in fact, ſome real diſtinction in the cauſe from which thoſe conceptions ariſe. But that there is ſuch a diſtinction in the divine attributes, appears not only from our having diſtinct ideas of them, but from our being capable of defining them ſeparately, and in diſtinct terms.

HE indeed, who conceives what is entirely one and the ſame act in God, to be ſo many different acts, conceives a plain falſity. But he who conceives what is entirely one and the ſame act in God objectively, or, if I may ſo ſpeak, eventually, and in relation to ſomething external to God, conceives what is true, tho' after a very imperfect and unequal manner. In ſhort, when we define the divine attributes, our definition of them, is not to be underſtood abſolutely or ſimply concerning the divine eſſence; for in that reſpect the juſtice, mercy, and goodneſs of God, are the ſame act; but relatively, as his action is diverſify'd on ſeveral ſubjects, and receives a different denomination from them, or whereby we apprehend him diſcovering his nature to us, in ſome new, and different light. Thus, when we conceive the juſtice of God to be an attribute really diſtinct from his mercy or goodneſs, our faculties do not deceive us; becauſe tho' theſe attributes are individually the ſame in their principle, yet in the diverſity of operations flowing from that principle, they are truly underſtood and defin'd, as ſo many different attributes.

I have here conſider'd ſuch attributes of God as are eſſential to him, and which, for that reaſon, we may with greater facility conceive to be individually the ſame with his eſſence, and with one another. But it may be farther queſtion'd, whether, without derogating from the divine perfections, God has not a power of producing in himſelf certain internal acts, which may be attributed to him, tho' they are not eſſential to his nature.

THE *Socinians*, in order to account for the production and character of the Holy Ghoſt, as a virtue or power of the divine eſſence, but whom they will not allow to be eſſentially God, ſuppoſe there may be certain internal operations of the divine nature really diſtinct from the eſſence of it. And they found this notion upon the receiv'd doctrine of God's decrees, and the free determination of his will, in reference to the conduct he has preſcrib'd to himſelf towards his creatures. For if, ſay they, God may decree or do any thing, which he might not have decreed or done, then his decree or action is not eſſential to him, but an accidental effect of his will. * For that is properly an accident, which may either adhere, or be wanting to its ſubject, without deſtroying the nature of it. But if God be not arbitrary in his decrees, eſpecially in his decrees of mercy and goodneſs, for thoſe of juſtice admit of a diſtinct conſideration; then in creating the world and redeeming mankind, he did not act by choice, or according to the ſcriptures, from a principle of *free grace*, but by an abſolute and inevitable neceſſity.

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* *Si enim liberâ voluntate deus præditus eſt, poteſt aliquid apud ſe ſtatuere, quod poterat etiam non ſtatuere. Actus ergo ille decernendi, in ipſo exiſtens accidens erit. Siquidem accidens eſt id omne, quod ita alicui ineſt, ut poſſit etiam abeſſe citra ſubjecti corruptionem.* Crellius de Deo & attrib. c. 32. p. 340.

Now it muſt be granted, tho' this argument does not conclude according to the uſe which the *Socinians* would make of it, againſt the divinity of the Holy Ghoſt, conſider'd as a perſon, perſonal actions in ſcripture being moſt expreſſly attributed to him; yet it does not ſeem eaſy, on other accounts, to give a clear and ſatiſfactory anſwer to this way of reaſoning. Thoſe who have thought themſelves concern'd to expoſe the error of it, in honour to the perfection and immutability of the divine nature, have rather perhaps undertaken an unneceſſary work, than ſucceeded well in it. Accidents, which add to the perfection of their ſubject, are indeed incompatible with the idea of a being infinitely perfect; but then we ſay, the decrees of God are not perfective of his nature or happineſs, but only the occaſional means of communicating that happineſs or thoſe perfections in a certain meaſure to his creatures, which are incapable of any diminution or increaſe in himſelf; neither can the decrees of God, tho' we ſhould not ſuppoſe them the ſame with his eſſence, argue the leaſt change or mutability in him; becauſe his nature does not hereby acquire any new perfection, but only exerts a perfection, that of liberty or free choice, which it was eternally the ſubject of. If it ſhould be farther objected, that to ſuppoſe any action in God, which is not abſolutely eſſential to him, is to deſtroy the perfect ſimplicity of his nature. To this again it is ſaid, that the action of a ſubject, and out of which it ariſes as its proper and ſole cauſe, does by no means infer compoſition in ſuch a ſubject, or add any new power, much leſs any power that is foreign to it; but is only an occaſion of manifeſting outwardly a power, which it was eſſentially inveſted with before.

YET I am ſenſible, in anſwer to what is advanc'd by thoſe, who contend for the freedom of the divine decrees, and maintain that God is altogether arbitrary in them, they who follow the ſchoolmen diſtinguiſh between the * relation, which his decrees have to the external object of them, and the principle or ſubject from which they flow. In the former reſpect, they allow them to be free, in the latter ſuppoſe them neceſſary. But this ſeems a diſtinction rather deſign'd to amuſe, than to convey any real light to the mind. For ſince no decree of God can be conceiv'd, but in relation to ſome object, the nature of the decree muſt be agreeable to that relation. To ſuppoſe God free in determining ſuch a thing ſhall be, and that, notwithſtanding, this determination is neceſſary with reſpect to himſelf, or the eſſential operations of his own mind, is to ſuppoſe, that he may be at the ſame time, and in the ſame reſpect, both a free, and a neceſſary agent.

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* *Decretum, quatenus in Deo, eſt neceſſarium ſive ipſa eſſentia Dei actuoſa, (ut loquuntur;) ſed quatenus varia objecta reſpicit, ſive quatenus relationem habet ad creaturas, & ratione termini ad extra, eſt liberum.* Fogg. theol. ſpecul. p. 54.

HAVING thought proper, by the way, to make theſe general reflections, concerning the divine attributes, I ſhall now proceed to conſider them more particularly, according to the common diſtribution of them, under the heads of incommunicable and communicable attributes; obſerving under the latter head, that other diſtinction between the attributes, which are term'd vital, and thoſe which we call moral.

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CHAP. II.

Of the incommunicable attributes of God: And, firſt, Of his ſimplicity.

BY this attribute I underſtand, that God is a moſt pure and ſpiritual being, free from all compoſition of parts, and in whom there can be no poſſible combination of any ſeparate or diſtinct powers. What is here ſaid concerning the ſimplicity of God, is agreeable to the doctrine of our church in her firſt article, which I ſhall therefore follow in my explication of this attribute, and whereby God is defin'd, *a being without body, without parts, or paſſions.*

1. *WITHOUT BODY.* I have already prov'd the neceſſity of diſtinguiſhing between thinking and corporeal beings, as importing in their own nature altogether ſeparate and diſtinct ideas. God, conſider'd as a body; cannot therefore be intelligent: And the deſign of the article, I humbly conceive, is not to ſhew that God is incapable in any ſenſe of acting upon body; but that the eſſential perfections of his nature can neither reſult from any combination of material parts, nor any compoſition of body and mind acting in concert together: For this general reaſon, that all compounding

ing parts, whether of the ſame, or a different nature, muſt be ſuppos'd previous, both in order of nature and time, to the thing compounded; which ſuppoſition, I ſay, if body either conſtitute the divine nature, or enter into the conſtitution of it, would evidently deſtroy the primary ideas of God, thoſe of independency and ſelf-exiſtence.

BESIDES, if God be corporeal, his body either is of a finite, or of an infinite extent; if only of a finite extent, he is a limited being, and particularly in one of the moſt glorious perfections, which we attribute to the divine nature, that of power. For whatever diſputes may ariſe concerning the action of ſpiritual beings, upon diſtant objects, yet it will be acknowledg'd, that bodies cannot of themſelves operate upon one another, but by contact; which would exempt all beings, except thoſe, wherewith the corporeal deity is ſurrounded and circumſcrib'd, at leaſt from his immediate action. But if, on the other hand, God be corporeal, and have a body of infinite extent, then, according to the doctrine of *Spinoſa*, which we have already obſerv'd the inconſiſtency of, the ſubſtance not only of every particular human body, but of every other particular being in the material world, will be the proper and individual ſubſtance of God.

NEITHER, for this farther reaſon, can the perfections of the divine nature be ſuppos'd to reſult from any poſſible antecedent combination of matter and mind; that ſuch a combination muſt either have been form'd, by accident, or by deſign, or from ſome abſolute neceſſity in the nature of the thing. To ſuppoſe a union of matter and mind in God, by accident, directly implies ſome cauſe of that accident, ſomething previous to what conſtitutes the nature of God; and who is not therefore in reſpect of ſuch a ſubſiſtence, a neceſſary, but a contingent being. To ſuppoſe the union of matter and mind in God to have been the effect of deſign, is, in the conſequence equally irrational, and implies, that God acted before he was properly and perfectly God. To ſuppoſe, laſtly, that there was an abſolute neceſſity in the nature of the thing, for a union of matter and mind in God, is to ſuppoſe a neceſſity without any manner of proof, and whereof there is not the leaſt appearance of reaſon or probability; but which ſtill involves us in this clear contradiction, that God, conſider'd properly as God, and in a ſtate of perfection, would depend as to his exiſtence on two diſtinct principles concurring towards it, and, in the natural order of our ideas, antecedent, by way of cauſality, to it.

2. *WITHOUT PARTS.* If God be incorporeal, it is a neceſſary conſequence, that he is without parts; for the proper notion we have

of body, and which diſtinguiſhes it from immaterial ſubſtance, is, that it is extended ſo as to have one part bounding upon another, and yet ſeparable from every other part; and therefore the ſame arguments, which prove the incorporeity of God, prove him, by direct implication, not to conſiſt of parts. It is, notwithſtanding, to be preſum'd, that the church in this article had ſome particular reaſon for diſtinguiſhing between body and parts; probably, to expoſe the error of the *Anthropomorphites* wherewith ignorant people are ſtill too apt to be impos'd upon, in a ſtronger light. If what conſiſts of parts of the ſame kind, has ſomething evidently imperfect in it, thoſe parts being ſeparately conſiderd leſs perfect, than the whole, and really * ſeparable from one another, and not convertible either with the whole, or with one another, much more will the imperfection of ſuch a being appear from the variety of organical parts, and the many ſubordinate modifications ſtill pre-requir'd to compoſe them.

WE muſt ſeek then for ſome other cauſe, why the ancient philoſophers ſo generally held the deity corporeal, than from the principles of philoſophy. I have obſerv'd before, that this error was favourable to Polytheiſm, and ſerves to give us the beſt account of its origin. The great wonder is, that no leſs an advocate for the chriſtian faith, than *Tertullian* †, ſhould have aſſerted the corporeity of God in ſo expreſs terms. And tho' St. *Auguſtin* endeavours to excuſe him, in ſaying, that by body he meant no more than ſubſtance in general; yet this apology does not ſeem to ariſe ſo much from any clear or ſolid foundation, as from the candour and piety of that good father.

WHEN bodily parts therefore are attributed to God, as they frequently are both in ſacred writ, and our common manner of ſpeaking, we are to underſtand what is ſaid, not in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe, but by way of alluſion to the parts of a human body; the imperfection of our faculties at preſent, being ſuch, that we are forc'd to make uſe of ſenſible images and repreſentations to ſhadow out to us ſpiritual objects, and that we may expreſs our conceptions of them with greater clearneſs and facility to others. In condeſcenſion to this general defect of human nature, God is pleas'd to ſpeak of his attributes and operations to us, after the manner of men. Thus to give us a more lively and ſtrong idea of his knowledge, he is repreſented as having eyes; of his power, as having hands; and of his ſovereignty, as ſitting upon a throne, where *thouſands of thouſands ſtand before him; and ten thouſand times ten thouſand miniſter unto him.* Naked truth being too bright a form for us to contemplate, theſe metaphorical expreſſions have a natural aptitude in them to forward our conceptions of the things, which they ſtand for ſo many ſenſible images of.

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* *T. Aquinas* argues much to this effect in ſo clear a manner, that I ſhall tranſcribe his words. *Omne compoſitum eſt aliquid quod non convenit alicui ſuarum partium, & quidem in totis diſſimilium partium manifeſtum eſt. Nulla enim partium hominis eſt homo. Neque aliqua partium pedis eſt pes. In toto verò ſimilium partium licèt aliquid quod dicitur de toto, dicatur de parte; ſicut pars aëris eſt aër, & aqua aquæ; aliquid tamen dicitur de toto, quod non convenit alicui partium; non enim ſi tota aqua eſt bicubita, & pars ejus. Sic igitur in omni compoſito eſt aliquid, quod non eſt ipſum.* Prima pars ſumm. quæſt. 3. art. 7.

† Lib. adverſùs Praxeam.

3. *Without passions.* Divines are not ſo generally agreed in explaining this branch of the article, as in their explications of the two former branches. That paſſion, as it denotes, according to the proper import of the word, a ſtate of ſuffering, and any painful or uneaſy ſenſation, cannot be attributed to God, is indeed univerſally acknowledg'd; but thoſe, who maintain that the paſſions, improperly therefore ſo call'd, may be conſider'd in a more abſtracted and metaphyſical ſenſe, as denoting purely certain regular motions of the will, without any real perturbation of mind; theſe men, I ſay, are of opinion, that paſſions, under ſuch an acceptation, may be attributed to God, without derogating from the perfection of his nature. They diſtinguiſh therefore in every human paſſion, between the act of the ſoul and the commotion of the animal ſpirits, which in conſequence of the union between the body and the ſoul, ordinarily attends it. But there being no ſuch union in God, there cannnot be for that reaſon any ſuch conſequence of it; and therefore indeed even in man, that ſenſible diſorder, which is obſerv'd ſo naturally to accompany his paſſion, is not to be conſider'd as properly and ſimply a paſſion in itſelf, but rather as an accidental occaſion of diſcovering the inward ſtate and temper of his mind, whereby many excellent ends of ſociety and religion are here ſerv'd; but without which ſenſible diſorder, the action of the mind may ſtill be ſuppos'd to ſubſiſt, and probably in a future ſtate, when thoſe particular ends proper to our preſent ſtate ceaſe, will for ever ſeparately ſubſiſt.

If it were derogatory to the honour of God to aſcribe paſſions to him in this ſenſe, why do we expreſs the motions of his will by the ſame names whereby we are agreed to expreſs human paſſions? If thoſe names convey no idea of operation in him to the mind, then the paſſions, or rather the affections (for that is the ſofter term in our preſent ſenſe) which are expreſs'd or repreſented by that idea, muſt have the ſame foundation in the divine nature with the other attributes of it, and be in ſome eminent manner at leaſt, if not formally, contain'd in it.

The reaſon why the ſchoolmen deny'd paſſions in this ſober acceptation to God, and which I therefore preſume is not excluded in the article, proceeded from their adhering too tenaciouſly to the opinion of *Ariſtotle*, that all the paſſions are ſeated originally in the body, or the lower and ſenſitive part of the ſoul. But they might upon the leaſt examination have obſerv'd, notwithſtanding their profound regard in general for the philoſopher, that his notion in this particular was very unphiloſophical. Nothing but the ſoul, whatever motions may be excited in the body, or whatever impreſſions may be made upon it, can properly ſuffer; when we ſee any animal diſmember'd or cut in pieces, it is not the violent agitation of the ſpirits or blood, that gives us the idea of pain, but our ſuppoſing it in ſome imperfect manner at leaſt capable of thought. And if it be impoſſible that any being, but what thinks, ſhould ſuffer, then 'tis abſurd to attribute paſſions in a proper ſenſe to the body, under any modification whatever; tho' by accident the body may be an occaſion of exciting or fortifying certain ſenſations, to which we give the name of paſſions, in the ſoul.

The *Stoicks* therefore, who ſeated the paſſions in the rational ſoul, argued in that reſpect more juſtly than *Ariſtotle* and his followers; yet in ſuppoſing them at the ſame time contrary to reaſon, and inconſiſtent with the character of a wiſe man, they argued no leſs weakly, tho' after a manner more directly inconſiſtent with themſelves.

But are there then, in oppoſition to both theſe errors, no reaſonable affections? Is it below the character of a rational being to have any motion of love towards itſelf, to take complacency in its own happineſs, or to *exerciſe loving kindneſs*, towards promoting the happineſs of other beings. In man, indeed, there is a mixture of imperfection in all ſuch paſſions, which renders him paſſive in a ſtrict ſenſe, and therefore we cannot form a juſt notion concerning paſſion in God, from what happens on occaſion of any paſſion in our ſelves: Yet ſo far as paſſion is only attended with the idea of goodneſs or perfection, excluſive of every thing that denotes imperfection, why may we not with equal truth and piety, aſcribe it to God in the ſame ſenſe, that we do the primary attributes of his nature? For otherways indeed, when God expreſſes himſelf in ſcripture, as to certain operations of his will, and calls them by the name of ſo many diſtinct paſſions, if they have no real foundation, the words whereby they are expreſs'd could not ſo juſtly be ſaid to convey a falſe idea, as no idea at all to the mind.

But had not God expreſs'd himſelf after ſuch a manner, the reaſon of the thing would have juſtify'd us in uſing the like expreſſions. For what can be more congruous to the perfections of the divine nature, than to ſay, that God loves the creatures he has made, that he delights in doing good, and in the actions of good men, and that he is a hater of iniquity. Is the will of God, do we ſuppoſe, perfectly indifferent in all theſe reſpects; or is he equally affected towards pious and wicked men? If he be, why does he reward the one, and puniſh the other? His action certainly, in theſe different diſtributions, according to our natural way of conceiving things, muſt follow ſome different correſponding motion in his will; why then, obſerving the diſtinction between what is perfect, and what is defective in the paſſions, ſhould it be ſaid, that a man in a proper ſenſe loves or rejoices, but that God only loves and rejoices notionally, and *as it were.*

But if the paſſions of love and joy may be truly and diſtinctly attributed to God, does not this infer that diſtinct qualities may really ſubſiſt in him, and that he is therefore not ſtrictly a ſimple, but in ſome reſpect a complex being? In anſwer to this, we obſerve the like diſtinction that was employ'd before, and conſider thoſe affections, to which we give the name of paſſions, in God; as we do his attributes of juſtice, goodneſs, or mercy, not as proceeding from principles really diſtinct in his nature; but from a different manner, whereby the one ſimple, and undivided principle of it externally operates. So that whatever affections or attributes we conceive as pertaining to God, the difference between them does not formally lie in the ſubject, but in the diverſity of objects which it acts and terminates upon; and according to which we form to our ſelves diſtinct, tho' inadequate conceptions of it. Seeing we cannot in a ſimple and full view comprehend the divine eſſence, as one general act, we are forc'd to conſider of it more particularly, as acting and diſplaying itſelf in variety of certain diſtinct effects: As in ſurveying a uniform building, which the eye cannot take in all at once, we obſerve one part after another, by carrying the ſight this way and that way, backwards and forwards upon it. The great rule to us in contemplating or defining the divine attributes of any kind, is, that we ſhould be ſtrictly careful to aſcribe nothing to God below the dignity of his nature, or which implies in it the leaſt imperfection.

Thus with reſpect to thoſe paſſions which ſeem to be attended with the greateſt imperfection; when God, for inſtance, is ſaid to be angry, we are to underſtand, that his conduct towards thoſe who have offended him, is like that whereby men are apt to diſcover their reſentment or diſpleaſure, on any moving provocation, towards one another. And tho' the paſſion of anger is ever attended in men with ſome real perturbation of mind; yet when this paſſion is attributed to God, we are only to conſider it as an external appearance of ſome like commotion in him, but from which, ſo far as it imports the leaſt inquietude, or diſorder, the eternal perfection of his nature abſolutely exempts him.

And ſo again when God is ſaid to have pity, and to be full of compaſſion, the meaning is, that he treats ſinners, eſpecially penitent ſinners under the circumſtances of miſery and diſtreſs, after the ſame manner we do perſons, in whoſe favour theſe paſſions ſenſible move and affect us.

By the like analogy to what paſſes on ſuch occaſions within our ſelves, tho' nothing, humanly ſpeaking, is more inconſiſtent with the idea of a being infinitely perfect, than grief and repentance; yet God is even ſaid to grieve and repent, when either what he commands is not executed, or what he has done is not attended with thoſe effects, which might in all reaſon, and the natural tendency of the thing, have been expected from it. Thus he is ſaid to have griev'd, that he made man, and to have repented of the judgment denounced by him againſt *Nineveh*; it being a natural indication of grief among men, when what they had with much wiſdom deſign'd, does not ſucceed; and of repentance, when they find reaſon for altering thoſe meaſures, which they had before determin'd or propos'd to purſue.

There will be leſs difficulty in accounting for thoſe other affections attributed to God, that imply in the nature of them leſs imbecillity or defect; which I ſhall not therefore enter upon the particular enumeration of. A diſtinct application of what has been ſaid in general to them, and for which reaſon I have enlarg'd the more on this article, will be in ſome meaſure, I hope, ſufficient to forward and rectify our notions concerning them, after a manner more worthy of God, and more agreeable to the infinite perfections of his nature.

I have hitherto conſider'd the ſimplicity of God, chiefly as oppos'd to all compoſition of material parts, and to all powers, that may be ſuppos'd to reſult from a union of matter and mind. But this attribute is farther conſider'd by divines, as oppos'd to any conceivable powers or faculties really diſtinct in a being purely immaterial. For principles really diſtinct argue a like compoſition in a thinking being, that diſtinct parts do in a corporeal being, or diſtinct thoughts and motions in a being, ſuch as man, compos'd both of body and ſpirit; and the ſame arguments lie againſt any poſſible compoſition in a ſelf-exiſtent, independent, and all perfect being, in all theſe reſpects. In our ſelves, it muſt be granted, we do not only conceive certain diſtinct powers and qualities, but which are in their own nature really diſtinct on account of their being ſeparable from one another, and their admitting the degrees of more or leſs both in different ſubjects, and at different times in the ſame ſubject. Thus one man has not only more knowledge and ſtrength than another, which qualities are yet capable of being impair'd, as well as increas'd, but than he has himſelf, with reſpect to the ſeveral periods of his age, or by occaſion of ſomething merely accidental to him. From which conſideration * St. *Auguſtin* argues very well, that a human ſoul, tho' in compariſon of body a ſimple being, yet is not abſolutely ſo in the ſame ſenſe, according to which we attribute perfect ſimplicity to God.

To the end we may have a more juſt idea of this attribute, the ſchools expreſs the divine eſſence by a pure and ſimple act; which does not only ſerve to give us a true, tho' imperfect conception of the divine nature, but is highly agreeable to that definition, God was pleas'd to make of himſelf to *Moſes*, *I am that I am*; than which words, none that we know, or are able to contrive, can be more ſtrong or ſignificant to repreſent this abſolute perfection of God; who was therefore in conformity to theſe words defin'd by *Plato*, whom *Juſtin Martyr* repreſents as highly affected with the force of them, to be ΑΥΤΟ ΩΝ, whereby this philoſopher did not only intend, that God was a ſelf-exiſtent being, in contradiction to any cauſe of his exiſtence, but a being identically the ſame, without compoſition of any diſtinct parts or powers whatever.

As to other diſtinctions of the ſchoolmen, whereby they oppoſe the ſimplicity of God to a kind of logical compoſition, in the ſcale of being; or to a metaphyſical compoſition of *exiſtence* and *eſſence*, of *nature* and *perſon*, of *act* and *potentiality*; I ſhall wave the conſideration of them as tending rather to diſcover the force and ſubtlety of mind in profoundly learned and ſpeculative perſons, than to promote any real ends of piety, or to explicate this attribute in particular, after a more clear and intelligible manner to common apprehenſions.

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* *Creatura quoque ſpiritalis, ſicut eſt anima, eſt quidem in corporis comparatione ſimplicior, ſine comparatione autem corporis multiplex eſt.*

Humano autem animo, non eſt hoc eſſe, quod eſt fortem eſſe, aut prudentem, aut juſtum; poteſt enim eſſe animus, & nullam iſtarum habere virtutum. Deo autem hoc eſt eſſe, quod eſt, fortem eſſe, aut juſtum eſſe, aut ſapientem eſſe. De Trinit. lib. 6. c. 4.

Again a little after in the ſame book and to the ſame effect, he adds; *Cùm enim aliud ſit, artificioſum eſſe, aliud inertem, aliud memorem, aliud timor, aliud lætitia; poſſuntque hæc & alia ejuſmodi innumerabilia in animæ inveniri naturâ, & alia ſine aliis; & alia magis, alia minus. Manifeſtum eſt animæ non ſimplicem ſed multiplicem eſſe naturam.* cap. 6.

Chap. III.

Of the immutability of God.

THE proof of this attribute naturally ariſes from what has been aſſerted under the foregoing head, that God is a moſt ſimple uncompounded eſſence, and from ſeveral paſſages before concerning his being abſolutely ſelf-exiſtent, and independent. For every change muſt ariſe from ſome diſagreeing, or at leaſt diſtinct principle in the ubject of it, or elſe from ſome cauſe external to its ſubject. The ſimplicity of God exempts him from any poſſible change in the former reſpect, and his ſelf-exiſtence and independency in the latter. If we farther conſider God as the firſt cauſe, to which all other beings owe their origin, the impoſſibility of the leaſt change incident to him from any external cauſe, will ſtill be more evident. For what derives its exiſtence, and conſequently all its powers from any other being, can have no power of acting upon that being, but in conſequence, if that can poſſibly be ſuppos'd, of its own will.

Now for God to will any change in himſelf by virtue of any means whatever, neceſſarily implies, that ſuch a change muſt either be from better to worſe, from worſe to better, or from equal to equal. A change in either of the former reſpects infers ſomething antecedently wanting to his perfection in general; a change for the better more particularly infers a defect of happineſs; a change for the worſe a defect of power or underſtanding; a change from equal to equal, ſuppoſes a change for which no good or reaſonable cauſe can be aſſign'd, and is conſequently inconſiſtent with another primary and eſſential attribute of God, that of wiſdom.

But tho' the immutability of God may be clearly prov'd by theſe, or the like human reaſons, yet no words can expreſs the nature of this attribute ſo properly, or with that force and evidence, as thoſe of the holy ſcriptures; ſome texts whereof I ſhall for that reaſon here recite, but without conſidering them, ſeeing I have not yet prov'd them divinely reveal'd, as having the ſanction of divine authority; which caution, if there be any juſt occaſion for it, I deſire may be obſerv'd in reference to all the citations produc'd by me from the inſpir'd writings, till I come to treat of them in the proper place. But to produce thoſe I propos'd on the preſent article, to expreſs the immutable nature of God, what forms of ſpeech could have been employ'd more powerful or proper to this end, I may add of a more ſublime ſtrain, than in the following paſſages. *With him is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning* [*]. *His counſel ſtandeth faſt for ever, and the thoughts of his heart to all generations* [†]. *There are diverſities of operations, but it is the ſame God, that worketh all in all* [‡]. *The earth and the heavens, O Lord, ſhall periſh, but thou ſhalt endure; yea all of them ſhall wax old, as doth a garment, and as a veſture ſhalt thou change them, and they ſhall be chang'd; but thou art the ſame, and thy years ſhall have no end* [**]. Theſe words, I acknowledge, were ſpoken by the pſalmiſt prophetically of Chriſt, and therefore properly apply'd in the apoſtolical writings to him [††]; but certainly the reaſon of them, abſtracting from this conſideration, will be granted to hold at leaſt equally ſtrong and evident, with reſpect to the immutability of God the Father.

Chap. IV.

Of the eternity of God.

By eternity I mean an infinite duration, which never had a beginning, and will never have an end. That God is eternal with reſpect to all paſt duration, is evident from what has been formerly prov'd to belong to him, neceſſary or ſelf-exiſtence. And that he is eternal with reſpect to all future duration, is no leſs evident, if not directly from his being ſelf-exiſtent, yet from what is directly and immediately conſequential to it, his independency of any foreign power or cauſe, that may be conceiv'd capable of deſtroying his exiſtence. Even thoſe who allow matter, tho' a paſſive principle, to be of itſelf eternally co-exiſtent with God, yet acknowledge for that reaſon, however God may be capable of acting upon it, the abſolute impoſſibility of its being annihilated by him. Upon an impoſſible ſuppoſition then, that God ſhould ever ceaſe to be, the diſcontinuance of his being, can only proceed from his own volition, or certain powers, if there be no impiety in making ſuch a farther ſuppoſition, which he may have in himſelf, after ſome peculiar manner unknown to us, over himſelf.

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[*] *James* i. 17. [†] *Pſalm* 33. 11. [‡] *Rom.* 1. 23. [**] *Pſalm* 102. 27, 28. [††] *Heb.* 1. 10, 11.

BUT, beſides that the power of God can in no reſpect be really diſtinguiſh'd from his eſſence, and that in our way of apprehending things, his power is rather an effect flowing from his eſſence, than the cauſe of it; upon neither of which accounts we can poſſibly conceive it employ'd to the deſtruction of his eſſence; beſides this conſideration, I ſay, the arguments which prove God incapable of change, conſider'd as a moſt ſimple, and in general the moſt perfect being, muſt be granted to hold ſtill ſtronger againſt a poſſibility of the total extinction of his being.

YET tho' no attribute of God is more clearly demonſtrable, than that of his eternity; it muſt be confeſs'd, on the other hand, there are none of his attributes which we are leſs able to form any clear or diſtinct conceptions of our ſelves, or to explicate in a diſtinct manner to others. For we cannot have an idea of eternal duration, without ſuppoſing a ſucceſſion of time; and ſucceſſion of time in a natural order of thinking, it is ſaid, muſt import ſome firſt moment, from which all future moments of it are deriv'd: So that the common argument againſt the eternity of the world, from an impoſſibility of eternal ſucceſſive revolutions perform'd by the heavenly orbs, ſeems equally to lie in this way of conceiving it, againſt the eternity of God. For there can have been no moment in an eternal ſucceſſion, but what was once preſent; and if all the moments of it were once preſent, and one of them in order after another, which the nature of ſucceſſion ſuppoſes, it will follow, that there was ſome one of them prior in this order, and to which therefore all the reſt were once future; which conſequence, if admitted, would wholly deſtroy the notion of eternity, as neceſſarily ſuppoſing a beginning of time in it.

IT muſt be own'd, there is ſome difficulty, in what is here objected concerning the nature of eternity; tho' we are certain, as we can be of any thing, that there is ſomething eternal; and that this character of eternity does more peculiarly, if not ſolely, as the ſchools commonly maintain, belong to the ſelf-exiſtent being: Tho' indeed ſuppoſing ſpace, or matter eternal, this way of arguing would equally hold againſt their being eternal; and ſince there muſt be ſomething, for that reaſon, in it, contrary to an acknowledg'd truth, it ought not, according to a ſtanding and receiv'd rule, to be admitted, tho' we ſhould not be able to give a clear and diſtinct ſolution of any ſophiſm or error contain'd in it. It would be ſufficient to ſay in general, that if we are not able to comprehend what is infinite, this does not ariſe from the incomprehenſible nature of it, conſider'd in itſelf, but from the imperfection of our faculties, which, comparatively, bear no manner of proportion to it. To ſuppoſe a finite being capable of comprehending an infinite, in the full extent of it, or in all its relations and properties, implies, in the nature of the thing ſomething more inconceivable, than that the eye of a man ſhould take in all the objects which ſurround him, and which are diſpers'd throughout the whole world, at once.

ALL our reaſonings, upon the properties of infinite, being inadequate, the terms wherein we ſpeak of them, muſt neceſſarily be defective. To talk of firſt or laſt in eternal duration, is like talking of more or fewer number of parts in quantity, when there is, properly ſpeaking, no determinate or aſſignable number of them at all. Matter being infinitely diviſible, or upon ſuppoſition that it is ſo, the leaſt atom contains as many parts, as the whole material ſyſtem; and for the ſame reaſon the revolutions of days and years, of the ſun and *Saturn*, ſuppoſing the world infinite in duration, would yet in their reſpective revolutions infer no inequality of time.

BUT ſtill perhaps it may be ſaid, this is rather to evade, than to anſwer the argument, whereby it appear'd, that in order of ſucceſſion there muſt be ſome moment of time prior to all the reſt; and then all the arguments for an eternal ſucceſſive duration, may with equal reaſon be pretended to lie againſt an acknowledg'd truth, on the other ſide: And ſo the reaſons for and againſt an eternal being will hold equally good; from which nothing can be concluded, but that we ought entirely to ſuſpend our judgment upon this article, and not determine any thing, one way or other, concerning it.

To which it is anſwer'd, that this concluſion would not hold good, tho' the arguments we propos'd againſt an eternal ſucceſſive duration, ſhould really appear as ſtrong as thoſe, which we are able to produce for it; becauſe the affirmative of the queſtion being clearly and demonſtratively prov'd on our part, what is urg'd for the negative, is only to be conſider'd as a mere objection, that ought not to lie againſt an acknowledg'd truth; and conſequently there is the ſtrongeſt preſumption, that the arguments alledg'd on that ſide, have ſomething in them at the bottom ſophiſtical or erroneous, tho' by reaſon of the infinite depth of the ſubject, and the ſcanty line, wherewith we meaſure it, 'tis impoſſible for us to go to the bottom of it.

YET we may perhaps be able in order to ſilence the ſceptick on this head, to give a more particular anſwer to what was objected, by obſerving, that if the argument from eternal ſucceſſive duration, really prove ſome firſt moment in eternity, then to ſuppoſe ſuch a firſt moment, does not deſtroy, but is, after all, conſiſtent with the nature of eternity. On the other hand, if that argument do not really prove a firſt moment in eternity, then, which is much more probable, it is certainly fallacious, and proves nothing at all againſt us. In ſhort, tho' we may not be able clearly to comprehend, how there could have been an eternal ſucceſſive duration, without beginning of time; yet it is clear to the higheſt degree of demonſtration, that there muſt have been ſuch a duration, whether a beginning of time were neceſſary to the ſucceſſive moments of it, or not.

What has been ſaid ſeems to give us at once a more eaſy and a more reaſonable account of the eternity of God, than the celebrated definition of *Boëtius*, which yet has ſo generally obtain'd among divines; who, after him, to avoid the difficulties which are ſuppos'd to attend the idea of ſucceſſive duration, when apply'd to God, have almoſt in an uninterrupted ſucceſſion, till of late, eſpouſed a notion, attended with much greater difficulties.

They ſuppoſe then that the eternity of God conſiſts in an indiviſible point, which they otherways expreſs by an eternal *now*; for indeed where the notions of men are perplex'd and confus'd, their expreſſions will be naturally indiſtinct or obſcure. But this notion, we ſay, ſo far as we are capable of underſtanding the terms, wherein it is expreſs'd, implies a direct inconſiſtency, and utterly confounds the diſtinction between momentary and eternal: For it ſuppoſes God at the ſame inſtant of time co-exiſtent with all paſt, and all future moments of time, without their being at the ſame time co-exiſtent with him, or with one another; which we can form no poſſible conception of, notwithſtanding the diſtinction of things exiſting in eternity, conſider'd as a point, not together or confuſedly, but in that order, according to which they exiſt. A diſtinction *, which ſeems, the more we attend to it, rather to corroborate the contrary notion, than what it is advanc'd to explain; and from which we ſo naturally draw, upon ſuppoſition of its being true, theſe or the like conſequences; that the world exiſted, before it was created; that the ſeveral revolutions of the planets, to aſcend no higher, are all abſolv'd in the ſame inſtant; that all mankind are contemporary, and the diſtinction of days, months, and years, not founded in any real difference or menſuration of time, but only in our way of conceiving the nature of motion.

To ſhew how incomprehenſible this definition of eternity is, thoſe, who oppoſe it, have farther argued from an impoſſibility of our conceiving, that the accompliſhment of a prophecy once promulg'd by God, and which is not to take place for ſeveral ages after, ſhould yet with reſpect to its accompliſhment actually co-exiſt with him at the very inſtant of its promulgation: For to ſay, that he actually co-exiſts with the accompliſhment of it, tho' it is not itſelf yet actually accompliſh'd, is to ſay, there may be in fact a relation, where there is one term of it only ſubſiſting.

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* *Cum æternitate ſimul exiſtunt præteritum & futurum, non confusè, ſed eo ordine, quo exiſtunt.* Fogg. theol. ſpec. p. 57.

But were there no impropriety in aſſerting this, we add, that if a being, to which we attribute eternal duration, co-exiſt with ſucceſſive beings not confuſedly, but in order of their ſucceſſion, as is granted in the foregoing diſtinction; ſtill it is impoſſible for us to comprehend, how the duration of ſuch a being ſhould not be ſucceſſive itſelf: For either there is ſome time before or after in the duration of it, or there is not; if there be, what we contend for is granted; if there be not, whatever things it co-exiſts with, it muſt neceſſarily co-exiſt with them, not ſeparately, or in a ſucceſſive order, but all at once: For if it co-exiſts now with one thing, now with another, as they come ſucceſſively into being, it will have a relation to one thing after another, and the manner of its own exiſtence, or continuance in being, can only be conceiv'd according to the order of that relation.

We cannot have a more clear idea of God, under the notion of an eternal being, than by conſidering him, as a being that *was, and is, and is to come; that liveth for ever and ever*, and who, from *everlaſting to everlaſting, is God:* Which words, tho' far from importing any ſucceſſive change or motion in the divine being, but rather expreſſing the fix'd, permanent, and immoveable ſtate of his exiſtence; yet plainly imply, that there is no neceſſity of conceiving him, at the ſame time co-exiſtent with all paſt and future moments of time; but only to have been preſent, and to continue for ever preſent, to all ſucceſſive periods and changes of time, without any change in himſelf.

The occaſion, upon which pious and learned men have been led to define the eternity of God, by an indiviſible point, ſeems to be this. To aſcribe paſt and future time to God, they thought, would at leaſt imply, that his being is mutable, that in the former reſpect it would ſuffer ſome kind of diminution, in the latter receive ſome acceſſion, if not import a continued renovation. But where is there any viſible ground for theſe or the like apprehenſions? The reaſon of change in beings, is not from their ſucceſſive duration, which denotes only an external reſpect to the time, wherein they exiſt, but from their acquiring new qualities and modifications of their proper ſubſtance, which they had not before, or their loſing thoſe, which they had. In relation to our ſelves, indeed, we inſeparably annex the idea of mutability to that of our duration; yet whatever changes we ſuffer, they are not properly owing to the nature of our duration, conſider'd abſtractedly as ſuch, but to the manner of it; to that continual flux in the particles of our body, and thoſe more violent diſorders, which the members of it are ſubject to, or to the unequal temper and different qualities of our mind, from which we have few intervals entirely free. But were it not for the ſucceſſive modifications of our own being in one or other of theſe reſpects, we ſhould ever continue and co-exiſt with the ſeveral periods of time, without receiving any change, or any denomination from them, but what would be purely external, and therefore incapable in any proper ſenſe of affecting us.

WHAT is here obſerv'd muſt rather hold the ſtronger, with reſpect to the duration of God; if he be ſuppos'd to exiſt this moment, or in any determinate period of time, wherein he did not exiſt before, it ariſes from hence, that the moment which now exiſts, had not an exiſtence ſooner; there is no change therefore in him, but only in the gradual progreſſion, if it may be call'd a change, of time without him.

IF a ſucceſſion of time do of itſelf infer no change, with reſpect to a being, exiſting in time, much leſs does it infer a continued extinction or renovation of ſuch a being. And tho' it has been commonly maintain'd, that the act of God, whereby he is conceiv'd to preſerve all created beings in their proper ſtate, is really a continued creation of them: Yet this notion did not ariſe from hence, that it is impoſſible, in the nature of the thing, for any being, except it ſhould be every moment created anew, to have a ſucceſſive duration; but becauſe no creature can ſubſiſt one moment without the immediate continued action of God. A ſucceſſion of time then, even in reference to the creatures, does not ſuppoſe a ſucceſſion of being, conſider'd abſtractedly from the fluid parts, or alterative qualities of it, but only from the conſideration, that they are impotent and dependent beings.

THERE is another reaſon, upon which divines may be ſuppos'd, to have more readily given into the notion I have been examining; they thought, perhaps, according to *Ariſtotle*'s definition * of time, there could be no time without ſucceſſive motion, whereby it is to be meaſur'd. It is certain the authority of this philoſopher, had a great influence towards eſtabliſhing many errors in thoſe ages of the chriſtian world, which paid, for the moſt part, an implicit deference to it; tho' it is probable his definition of time, in particular, was not intended by him in a ſenſe ſtrictly philoſophical, but only in a popular ſenſe, with regard to the periodical revolutions of the heavenly bodies, eſpecially of the ſun, or the variety and progreſſive change of the ſeaſons.

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* Ὁ χρόνος ἐςὶν ἀριθμὸς κινήσεως κατὰ τὸ πρότερον ϗ ὕςερον. Phyſ. l. 4. c. 2.

BUT what account then, upon their own principles, could the followers of *Ariſtotle*, who believ'd the ſcriptures, give concerning the diſtribution of time into day and night before the formation of the heavens, which was the work of the ſecond day, or of the celeſtial orbs, particularly the ſun, which was the work of the fourth day? Will they ſay, that before the ſecond or fourth day, or during the ſpace, that the ſun ſtood ſtill in the days of *Joſhua*, there was properly no time or ſucceſſive duration, but that the firſt or the ſecond following days were not really diſtinguiſhable from eternity, and that *Joſhua* purſu'd and conquer'd his enemies in an indiviſible point of duration? Or ſuppoſing there were really no material being, and conſequently in a ſtrict ſenſe no motion in the world, could it be ſaid, that a thinking being, that regularly purſues a train of thoughts, would not really exiſt, by way of ſucceſſive duration in time, as now that time, according to popular eſtimation, is calculated from motion? Again, if God ſhould think fit to annihilate this world, and create another, is any man capable of aſſerting, that the ſpace or interval between the one and the other world, would be eternal? I only propoſe theſe things by way of queſtion; and 'tis impoſſible for thoſe, who ſuppoſe time, as it denotes a ſucceſſive continuance, to depend on motion, to give a ſatisfactory anſwer to ſuch enquiries, or to any one of them.

I have endeavour'd in the beſt manner I could, to ſtate the true notion concerning this divine attribute of eternity: But ſtill we muſt have recourſe to the ſcriptures for thoſe rich and noble expreſſions, which give us the moſt juſt and lively idea of it. For at the ſame time, they repreſent it to the mind in the cleareſt light, they have an irreſiſtible force to excite the moſt pious and moving ſenſations in the heart.

THE royal pſalmiſt, ſpeaking of this divine attribute, expreſſes himſelf after a manner, agreeable to the light which ſhines throughout all his devotional compoſures, and the flame, which animates them. *Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadſt form'd the earth and the world, even from everlaſting to everlaſting, thou art God. A thouſand years in thy ſight are but as yeſterday, when it is paſs'd, and as a watch in the night* *.

THERE are ſeveral paſſages in the prophet *Iſaiah* concerning this attribute, ſuitable to that ſublimity of thought, and force of expreſſion,

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* *Pſalm* 90. 2, 4.

preſſion, which diſtinguiſh that prophet. *Haſt thou not known? haſt thou not heard? that the everlaſting God the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not* *. *Thus ſaith the Lord, I am the firſt, and I am the laſt, and beſides me there is no God* †. *Thus ſaith the high and lofty one, who inhabiteth eternity* ‡. To which I ſhall only add two texts out of the New Teſtament, the firſt from the Revelations, wherein God is alſo repreſented, as ſpeaking himſelf of his eternal duration. *I am alpha and omega, the beginning and ending, ſaith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come* **. The latter from the ſecond epiſtle of St. *Peter*. *One day is with the Lord, as a thouſand years, and a thouſand years, as one day* ††.

I the rather mention this text, becauſe it has been urg'd on the other ſide, to prove that the eternity of God excludes the idea of ſucceſſive duration. But this is advanc'd without grounds: For the apoſtle is not here ſpeaking, as if there were no difference between a thouſand years, and one day, with reſpect to the duration of God, conſider'd in itſelf; but with reſpect to his duration compar'd to that of man: Tho' if the words were to be underſtood abſolutely concerning the duration of God, they would by no means prove what they are alledg'd for, becauſe ſucceſſion of time is equally imported in the duration of one day, as in that of a thouſand years.

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CHAP. V.

Of the immenſity of God.

EVERY attribute of God is attended with an idea of infinite perfection; but infinity is in a more peculiar manner conſider'd by divines, with reference to his eternal exiſtence, and his immenſity. In the former reſpect there was no time, nor any duration, we can conceive, prior to time, when he *was* not; and in the latter reſpect, there is no place, and I will add, for the reaſons I ſhall in the ſequel produce, any imaginable ſpace, wherein he *is* not.

1. IF there be any place, where God is not, his being is of a limited extent; we are forc'd here to ſpeak according to common

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* *Iſaiah* 40. 28. † Chap. 44. 6, 7. ‡ Chap. 57. 15. ** *Rev.* 1. 8.
†† 2 *Pet.* 3. 8.

apprehenſion, and conſequently his operations will be ſo too. If there be, for inſtance, any part of the world from which God is excluded, as to his eſſence, by whatever cauſe he is ſo excluded, by the ſame cauſe he is reſtrain'd from acting without thoſe bounds. For ſince neither the power, nor any other attribute of God, is really diſtinguiſh'd from his eſſence, but only in our manner of conceiving it; wherever he acts, his action muſt neceſſarily be immediate; or, in other words, he cannot any where act, but where he really and eſſentially is; and conſequently, whatever being fills the place, from which he is excluded, it muſt be abſolutely independent of his action; which, if admitted, would not only deſtroy the notion of a moſt perfect being in general, but of a firſt cauſe, from which all other beings are deriv'd.

WHAT I intend, in other words, is, that ſuppoſing every thing created by God, his eſſence of neceſſity muſt have always been, and muſt always continue to be, of the ſame extent with the whole creation; to ſuppoſe him excluded from any part of it, is to ſuppoſe ſuch a part to be created, and yet not to be created by his action.

IF it be urg'd, that we cannot ſtill conclude from this argument the immenſity of God in an abſolute ſenſe, and that it only proves, of whatever extent we may ſuppoſe the creation, whether of things viſible or inviſible, there we muſt neceſſarily ſuppoſe the immediate preſence and action of the creator; I anſwer, that what has been ſaid, tho' it does not directly prove the immenſity of God in an abſolute ſenſe, or beyond the ſcene of his operations, yet it leads to the proof of it by an eaſy and obvious deduction.

2. FOR the ſame power of God, which created the world, whatever aſſignable extent we give it, might, if he had thought fit, have given it a farther extent; there being no previous cauſe requir'd to the production of things, but his ſole and arbitrary will, there can be no reaſon, why his will might not have operated every where in infinite ſpace, as well as any where; or why he might not to infinity, ſo far as we are able to conceive what is infinite, have ſtill added more and more worlds to the preſent ſyſtem.

IF God be not without the world, as well as in it, his eſſence, and conſequently his power, which is inſeparable from it, would be terminated by the world, and it would be impoſſible, upon this ſuppoſition, that there ſhould be any more creatures produc'd in the extramundane ſpace, if there really be any ſuch; if there be not, and the creation, as ſome philoſophers hold, conſiſts of an infinite plenitude, then the immenſity of God muſt neceſſarily be commenſurate to it, and ſo eſtabliſh'd, as was before obſerv'd, by a more direct proof.

But when we argue with thoſe, who do not believe a *plenum*, why ſhould it be more impoſſible for God to produce a greater number of creatures in ſpace, than it was originally impoſſible for him, to produce any? Such an impoſſibility muſt either ariſe from without or within himſelf: It cannot ariſe in the latter reſpect, becauſe there is nothing more requir'd in him to operate than to will; and from without there is nothing more to oppoſe his will, or hinder the execution of it, than when the things which actually exiſt, were firſt created. From whence divines have piouſly concluded, that God is in a ſenſe every where, and yet no where; every where in relation to place, but no where contain'd or circumſcrib'd by place; that, what makes, being of a greater extent, than what is made, the world may more properly be ſaid to be in God, than God in the world; and that he is eſſentially in the extramundane ſpaces after the ſame manner he was in ſpace, before this mandane ſyſtem was in being: So that he can by virtue of the ſame power, which originally effected the creation, produce with the greateſt facility, and in an inſtant, as many worlds as he pleaſes, and, if that be a poſſible conception, to infinity.

For after all, infinity, whether with reſpect to the eternal duration, or immenſity of God, is not directly a poſitive idea, but only a negation of any defect or want of his power, in a courſe of continual progreſſion, which the mind can never come to the end of; it being impoſſible that what is finite ſhould have a conception commenſurate to what is infinite, as that the thing contain'd ſhould be of the ſame extent or dimenſion, with the thing containing. But this is no more an argument to overthrow the proofs of an immenſe, than thoſe of an eternal being, as will appear from the ſame reaſons urg'd by me in treating of that attribute, and which need not therefore be repeated. I ſhall only add this reflection in reference to both theſe attributes; that it is ſtrange, and contrary to the eſtabliſh'd rules of reaſoning in other caſes, that the atheiſt ſhould urge our incapacity of conceiving what is infinite againſt the thing itſelf, when upon ſuppoſition there is ſomething infinite, it really muſt be inconceiveable.

Neither is it neceſſary, ſo long as we believe the thing, to determine too curiouſly, or with too definitive an air, concerning the manner of the divine omnipreſence: And yet to give us a more diſtinct conception of what we cannot conceive adequately, divines, in ſpeaking of this attribute, have agreed to repreſent God as preſent with reſpect to his eſſence, his power, and his knowledge; tho' in effect the two latter conſiderations reſolve into the former, and do not denote any real difference in the manner of

God's omnipreſence, but only in the external manifeſtation of it: His attributes, as we have prov'd, not being ſeparable from his eſſence, wherever he is preſent by his knowledge, or by his power, he is alſo preſent by his eſſence.

When it is ſaid therefore, *the eyes of the Lord are in every place beholding the evil and the good* *; that *he looketh unto the ends of the earth, and ſeeth under the whole heaven* †; and that *he beholdeth all the ſons of men, from the place of his habitation* ‡. We are from theſe expreſſions only to apprehend the divine nature, as exerting itſelf in acts of knowledge, and operating with reſpect to whatever exiſts, or may have a poſſible exiſtence, conſider'd more particularly as an object of the divine underſtanding.

And ſo again, when we conceive God as more peculiarly preſent by the effects of his power or favour, whether in heaven, or in places more immediately appointed to his ſolemn worſhip and ſervice, the meaning is, that notwithſtanding he is eſſentially preſent in all places; yet, for reaſons which we are not wholly incapable of accounting for our ſelves, he chooſes to manifeſt theſe effects in ſome places, rather than in others: So that even when we conceive him ſeated in the throne of his glory, if we apprehend him preſent to the holy angels, the chief miniſters of his kingdom, in any other ſenſe, than by a more glorious and immediate appearance of his Majeſty, at the ſame time we endeavour to exalt and magnify his greatneſs, we evidently detract from it.

These ſentiments concerning the immenſity of God, are highly agreeable to what is ſpoken of it in the following, and ſeveral other paſſages of ſcripture.

1. He is every where preſent by his power. *He worketh ſigns and wonders in heaven and in earth, and calleth thoſe things that be not, as though they were* **. He *is a God of the valleys, and not only of the hills* ††. *When his word goeth forth out of his mouth, it ſhall not return unto him void*; but it *ſhall accompliſh that which he pleaſeth, and it ſhall proſper in the thing whereto he ſendeth it; as he hath thought, ſo ſhall it come to paſs, and as he hath purpos'd, ſo ſhall it ſtand; and what his ſoul deſireth, even that he doth* ‡‡.

2. He is every where preſent, by his knowledge. To the texts already cited, concerning this attribute, I ſhall only add theſe that follow. *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world* *. *Neither is there any creature, that is not manifeſt*

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* *Prov.* 15. 3. † *Job* 28. 24. ‡ *Pſalm* 33. 13. ** *Dan.* 6. 27. —*Rom.* 4. 17. †† 1 *Kings* 20. 28. ‡‡ *Iſaiah* 55. 11. * *Acts* 15. 18.

in his ſight, but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do[*]. *He declareth the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things, that are not yet done*[†]. *Shall the thing fram'd, ſay of him that fram'd it, He hath no underſtanding*[‡]*? He that planted the ear, ſhall he not hear? He that form'd the eye, ſhall he not ſee? He that teacheth man knowledge, ſhall he not know*[**]*?* In which latter texts the infinite knowledge of God is not only ſuppos'd, but prov'd upon theſe philoſophical and unanſwerable principles; that whatever power or perfection there is in the effect, it muſt be eminently contain'd in the cauſe; and if the cauſe be intelligent, ſuch power and perfection muſt of neceſſity be intelligible to it, in all the operations of them.

3. GOD is every where, according to the ſcriptures, eſſentially preſent. *He filleth all in all*[††]. *He is a God at hand, and not a God afar off*[‡‡]. *Whither ſhall I go,* ſays holy *David, from thy ſpirit, O Lord; or whither ſhall I flee from thy preſence? If I aſcend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there*[*]. *Do not I fill heaven and earth, ſaith the Lord*[†]*?*

4. IT appears farther from the holy ſcriptures, that the real or eſſential preſence of God, is not according to the opinion of *Vorſtius* and *Curcellæus*, any ways circumſcrib'd definitly or indefinitly within the confines of heaven, but is truly beyond the extent of all created beings, viſible and inviſible. *The heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee, O God*[‡]. *He is high,* in this perfection, *as heaven; deeper than hell; the meaſure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the ſea*[**]. *His glory,* with reſpect to the infinite plenitude of his being, in a ſtrict and literal ſenſe, *is above the heavens.* The argument therefore of St. *Stephen, Howſoever the moſt high dwelleth not in temples made with hands*[††], equally holds againſt our ſuppoſing his eſſence terminated by this glorious and magnificent ſtructure of things, created by him, what extent ſoever our minds, by continual addition, may be capable of giving it.

BUT, taking it for granted, that God is every where eſſentially preſent, and in that boundleſs extent of being, which has been aſſerted, how ſhall we be able ſtill to conceive, or define the manner of his omnipreſence, which I here conſider only as a different term to expreſs his immenſity? For whether we conſider God, as an immenſe being, under the notion of an indiviſible point, or, according to the common illuſtration, of a centre that is every where, but whoſe circumference is no where; or, on the other hand, by way of infinite extenſion; we are preſs'd on both ſides with difficulties, that appear inſuperable, and which perſons of the greateſt force and penetration of mind have own'd themſelves incapable of accounting for, upon any clear and diſtinct grounds.

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[*] *Heb.* 4. 13.
[†] *Iſaiah* 46. 10.
[‡] *Iſaiah* 29. 16.
[**] *Pſal.* 94. 9, 10.
[††] *Epheſ.* 1. 23.
[‡‡] *Jer.* 23. 23.
[*] *Pſalm* 139. 7, 8.
[†] *Jer.* 23. 23.
[‡] 1 *Kings* 8. 27.
[**] *Job* 11. 8, 9.
[††] *Acts* 7. 48.

1. To repreſent the immenſe being under the notion of an indiviſible point, or the centre of a circle, every where diffus'd, leaves the mind as much, or rather more, in the dark, than if no repreſentation had been made, concerning the manner of his omnipreſence, at all: Beſides that this notion ſeems highly to detract from the majeſty, the unity, the purity and holineſs of the divine nature. It ſuppoſes the greateſt, the moſt capacious and comprehenſive being, to be the leaſt and moſt limitted of all beings, real or imaginary. It repreſents the divine eſſence whole and entire in every point, and yet but one individual eſſence, without multiplication, in all points: From which ſome have farther inferr'd, that it tends to confound all diſtinction between God and the creatures; for if there be no imaginable point where the divine eſſence is not whole and entire, every thing, as they conceive, which we ſee, or that exiſts any where in place, muſt be reputed the divine eſſence: Laſtly, they think this notion altogether inconſiſtent with the character of a moſt pure and holy being, as it ſuppoſes God, in regard to his eſſence, equally preſent in clean and impure ſubjects, in wicked and good men, in angels and devils.

These are the objections *, which have been commonly urg'd, and they appear at leaſt to have ſome reaſonable foundation againſt this notion of God's being every where, and in every point of the univerſe, eſſentially, and individually preſent.

Let us ſee whether, in anſwer to what is here advanc'd, we may be capable of giving any reaſonable ſolution, tho' without determining any thing too poſitively on ſo very difficult a ſubject.

In general we may obſerve, that what has been ſaid, proceeds from a natural incapacity we are under of having any ſimple or abſtract idea of incorporeal ſubſtance: For which reaſon when we ſpeak of it, we are forc'd to make uſe of improper and figurative alluſions, and to expreſs our ſelves in terms deriv'd from ſenſible objects; this naturally leads us to apply ſuch properties, as we obſerve in thoſe objects, to things, which are really in themſelves, and their abſtract ideas, incapable of being repreſented by any ſenſible image, or appearance whatever: Upon which account are

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* V. Limborch theol. chriſt. p. 62. 4°.

theſe declarations of the holy penmen in ſcripture; that, *God is great, and we know him not; touching the almighty, we cannot find him out to perfection* *. *When we ſpeak of him, we cannot order our ſpeech by reaſon of darkneſs: ſuch knowledge is too wonderful for us, it is high, we cannot attain unto it* †. Which words of the pſalmiſt, we may remark, are not ſpoken concerning the divine perfections in general, but with a particular reſpect to this attribute of immenſity.

IT is for want then of pure, and perfectly ſimple ideas, that when we conceive the immenſe God, either under the notion of an indiviſible point, or an infinitely extended being, we reaſon differently concerning the manner of his preſence, as we would do concerning the leaſt particle, or the wideſt and moſt extended bulk of matter; yet it will by no means follow, that where there is ſome imperfect or conceivable reſemblance of one thing to another, our concluſions in attributing the ſame real properties to them, are juſt or allowable.

BUT to anſwer more particularly to what has been objected; it is ſaid not to imply any expreſs contradiction, that the divine eſſence ſhould be whole and entire in every point, and yet be but one and the ſelf-ſame being, without multiplication, in all points: This way of reaſoning is allow'd to hold certainly and demonſtratively good, with reſpect to corporeal ſubſtance, which conſiſts of diſtant and ſeparable parts, and therefore it is invincibly apply'd to overthrow the doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation; but when it is form'd upon our ideas of incorporeal ſubſtance, which is indiviſible, without parts, and, ſtrictly ſpeaking, without any intelligible points, it is altogether inconcluſive; as proceeding from an impropriety of expreſſion, which we are neceſſitated to employ, and not from the real nature of the thing.

FOR that it cannot proceed from the nature of the thing, is argued from the impoſſibility of conceiving how an immaterial ſubſtance ſhould be otherways united to, or co-exiſtent with corporeal ſubſtance, than by being all and entire in every part of it. Either immaterial ſubſtance muſt be whole and entire with every part of the corporeal ſubſtance it has an immediate communication with, or elſe it muſt only be united to it part by part; ſo that their ſeveral parts ſhall be equally co-extended. But this is to confound the notion of extended, and unextended ſubſtance, and to make that diviſible, which is confeſſedly in its own nature indiviſible.

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* *Job* 36. 26. † *Pſalm* 139. 6.

AND if this argumentation be juſt, in reſpect to the ſoul of man, as united to his body, or to the principal parts of his brain, for the reaſon holds equally good in both caſes; it will ſtill hold with greater force, in reſpect to that moſt pure and infinite being, whoſe nature implies the moſt perfect ſimplicity, and who may be ſaid, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, and without a figure, to be *all in all*.

IT is farther reply'd to the ſecond article of what was objected, that to ſuppoſe the immenſity of God to conſiſt in a point, does not in the leaſt tend to confound the diſtinction between God and his creatures. If there were any force in the argument on the other ſide, it would prove too much. This conſequence might be drawn clearly from it, that wherever any created being is, there the divine being is excluded, and that God therefore is no where really preſent in the world, but only in ſpace. As to a farther incidental charge brought againſt the notion of immenſity, which we are examining, that it leads to idolatry, by making every viſible creature a proper object of worſhip, there being no aſſignable point, wherever we turn our eyes, but where God is eſſentially preſent; it is ſaid, this inference is falſe; idolatry conſiſts in tranſferring that honour and worſhip we owe to God, upon ſuch things as are by nature no Gods, and which, by ſuppoſing all viſible beings to be creatures, we by that very act confeſs to be no Gods; they are not our eyes which terminate the object of our worſhip, but our thoughts; and while we ſeparate in our thoughts, the idea of the inviſible God from the things that are ſeen, as of neceſſity we muſt do by diſtinguiſhing between the creator and the creatures, where can there be any formal, or indeed imaginable grounds for the charge of idolatry. This notion, on the other hand, ſeems ſo far from leading to an idolatrous worſhip, that it is impoſſible, conſiſtently with it, either for men to worſhip any corporeal extended being, as God, or to ſuppoſe the divine nature capable of being repreſented by any corporeal image.

To the laſt part of the objection, which was thought to affect the purity and holineſs of God, it may be anſwer'd, that thoſe who urge it, proceed upon a ſuppoſition, as if God were preſent with his creatures by way of corporeal contact, and from which he might be capable of ſuffering ſome pollution: Inferences, wholly proceeding from the groſs illuſions of ſenſe! For if we conſult reaſon, and argue from the ſimplicity of the divine nature, how is it poſſible that the different modifications of other beings, after what manner ſoever God may be preſent with them, ſhould effect the leaſt change, or any new modification in himſelf? Tho' as to ſenſible objects, notwithſtanding, ſince the fall, they are here upon earth in a ſtate of diſorder; yet conſider'd in themſelves,

ſelves, and ſetting aſide the reports of ſenſe and imagination, they are equally pure. As to immaterial ſubſtances, ſimply conſider'd as ſuch, they too are naturally pure and good. Sin, which is nothing poſitive, but a mere negation of the rectitude which ought to be in them, is in reality nothing; and conſequently God, however preſent with a ſinner, can have no union with his ſin, nor poſſibly receive any contamination from it. But then again,

2. IF, on the other hand, we conceive the ubiquity of the divine eſſence, after the manner of ſomething infinitely extended, it will be very hard for us to ſeparate the idea of diviſibility from that of extenſion. But this, it is ſaid, is only a difficulty ariſing from an incapacity of expreſſing our ſelves, otherways than by ſenſible repreſentations, or of conceiving that by a clear and abſtract idea without ſeparable parts, and I may add, without figure, even which we know by clear and convincing proofs, to be neither figur'd nor diviſible.

YET tho' this notion concerning the immenſity of God, appears more agreeable, than the former, to the dignity of the divine nature, and attended with fewer and leſs difficulties, I dare not take upon me to charge the former either with abſurdity, or with impiety. All I contend for, is, that the immenſity of God being capable of a direct proof, and neither of theſe methods, in the opinion of ſeveral learned men, neceſſarily implying a contradiction, nor perhaps any real repugnancy at the bottom to one another, there being no ſuch thing in a pure ſimple eſſence, as a whole ſeparable from a part, and a part from the whole; or a poſſibility either of multiplication or diviſion; men are at more liberty to determine themſelves, without preſcribing magiſterially to others, as they are able to form in their minds in either reſpect more clear and diſtinct apprehenſions; or according (for there is no article of religion, upon which a ſupernatural light is more neceſſary to direct all men) as God may deal ſeverally to them the meaſure of his illuminating grace.

CHAP. VI.

Of the unity of God.

I Shall not here enlarge on what was incidentally offer'd before in proof of this attribute, from the idea of God, conſider'd as a ſelf-exiſtent being, or a being that exiſts by an abſolute neceſſity of nature. But referring the reader to what has been ſaid already on this argument, ſhall here conſider only the force of thoſe other arguments for the unity of the divine nature, which have been thought moſt ſolid and concluſive. And,

1. To prove the unity of the divine nature, it has been commonly urg'd, that we cannot ſuppoſe more Gods than one, without ſuppoſing a poſſibility, not to ſay on the occaſion we are proceeding to conſider, a very high probability of diſcord between them. Now the perfection of the divine nature excludes every idea that may imply, or, on any poſſible ſuppoſition, import the leaſt defect; which yet muſt neceſſarily be incident to it, if any one of the deities, for we now argue upon a conceſſion of their number, ſhould reſolve to act externally; to create, for inſtance, a certain number of other beings, and to endow them with certain peculiar powers and faculties: For ſince theſe are arbitrary effects of goodneſs, and depend on the ſole will and pleaſure of the creator, without any other antecedent cauſe determining him to act, for then they would not be arbitrary, he may abſolutely determine, as he ſees fit, concerning both the time, and manner of his effecting them; which yet he cannot be conceiv'd to do, if there are other beings equally powerful, and who have an equal liberty of determining whether they will operate externally; or if they do, when they will begin their operation, and how proceed in it. Admitting then a plurality of Gods, hence it is inferr'd they may very reaſonably be conceiv'd to oppoſe the deſign, and obſtruct the action of one another; from which no external effect at all, but only the greateſt confuſion and diſturbance among themſelves could be apprehended to follow. Conſequences, which are neither reconcileable with the infinite power or perfect happineſs of the divine nature, nor indeed with the perfections of it in general.

To this it is ſaid, that beings equally and infinitely perfect will always think and deſign the ſame thing, and execute it the ſame way: And that theſe conſequences therefore are ſo far from being founded in probable reaſons, that there is not ſo much as a poſſible foundation for them.

But this argument, we ſay, holds only with reſpect to the reſolutions of moral agents, not with reſpect to thoſe of free agents, conſider'd ſimply as ſuch, thoſe reſolutions, I mean, which might or might not have been form'd, and executed, without any imputation injurious to thoſe moral perfections of the divine being, wiſdom and juſtice, goodneſs and holineſs. In none of which reſpects, God was under any neceſſity of nature, either to create the world, and the ſeveral beings in it, or to create them at the time, or according to the order wherein they were originally form'd, and do at preſent ſubſiſt.

Yet it muſt be acknowledg'd this diſtinction of a moral and a free agent, when referr'd to God, is of leſs force to thoſe, who believe, that notwithſtanding the perfect freedom of his choice, he is always under a neceſſity of doing what is beſt to be done, and in the beſt manner: And if he can only act, as infinite wiſdom and goodneſs direct, then ſuppoſing more Gods than one, and all of them infinitely wiſe and good, they muſt ſtill will the ſame thing, and deſign the ſame method of executing it.

But to this it is anſwer'd again, that the queſtion is not, whether if an all perfect being once determin'd to act, ſhould purſue the beſt and wiſeſt meaſures in conducting his action; but whether there be any thing antecedently to his own free and immediate volition, that ſhould induce him to act at all. If there be any ſuch antecedent motive, then all the acts of his goodneſs are neceſſary, and the world could not have been created at any other time, nor the ſeveral ſpecies of beings in it have been more or leſs than they are. In ſhort, no diſpoſition or event of providence could have happen'd otherways, than it actually has happen'd. There could be no ſuch thing, conſequently, as an act of pure favour, or good pleaſure, or free grace in God, but only of a grace flowing from an abſolute neceſſity of fitneſs and congruity; which is to deſtroy the diſtinction of his wiſdom and goodneſs, and to make him a neceſſary agent, in the emanations of that very attribute, which in the nature and our common notions of it, and I may add, in the terms it is ſpoken of in holy writ, implies the moſt perfect freedom imaginable, from any previous impelling cauſe. Upon this ſuppoſition, neither the creation nor the redemption of the world could have been an act of grace, but conſider'd in reference to God, ſtrictly, and in a proper ſenſe, of debt: Not indeed from any merit of man, but from the eternal and eſſential rectitude of the divine nature. If there be, on the other hand, no antecedent motive, which determines God to act, but only his free will and good pleaſure, then the argument from a poſſibility of different wills and deſigns in different beings, tho' ſuppos'd infinitely perfect, will ſtill hold good.

ANOTHER argument for the unity, is taken from the immenſity of God; and the ſtrength of it ſeems to lie in this, that we cannot ſuppoſe two or more beings every where preſent, or perfectly in the ſame place: We cannot indeed ſuppoſe two bodies in the very ſame place, without deſtroying the nature of them, and making them extended and unextended, penetrable and impenetrable at the ſame time. But when we reaſon concerning the exiſtence of ſpirits and immaterial ſubſtances in place, we reaſon upon inadequate ideas, and are forc'd to employ improper terms. The manner of their exiſting is ſo wholly different from that of bodies, that we can have no imaginable grounds for drawing concluſions in one caſe, to the other. This, however, ſeems in itſelf a very clear and reaſonable concluſion, that if two beings may be any where in the ſame place, it implies no repugnancy in the nature of the thing, but that two or more beings, ſuppoſing them infinite, may be every where, in the ſame place. Now granting the immateriality of thinking beings, and that there is no place from which God is excluded, we are under an abſolute neceſſity of ſuppoſing, that immaterial ſubſtances not only may, but do in fact ſomewhere co-exiſt; and tho' after a manner unknown to us, perfectly in the ſame place: From whence this argument to prove the unity from the immenſity of God, as it denotes his omnipreſence, has been thought by learned men, inſufficient to the end, for which it is produc'd.

IT has been farther urg'd to prove the unity of the divine nature, that, as in all governments, order requires ſome ſuperior and laſt reſource of power; ſo the nature of an all perfect being requires, that this ſuperiority ſhould wholly terminate in him; they add farther, that ſupremacy is neceſſarily included in the idea of him. The fathers have illuſtrated the former branch of this argument, from the example of ſeveral ſpecies of beings in the world, reſpectively under the influence and direction of ſome one particular being at the head of them. But tho' their illuſtrations, ſuppoſing the truth of the thing, are very pertinent, yet they by no means appear to prove it, nor were perhaps directly intended by the fathers in proof of it. We grant no government can be preſerv'd without order, yet it does not follow in the reaſon of the thing, that order cannot be preſerv'd in any government, but where one perſon ſolely preſides; eſpecially when there may be an entire conformity in the deſigns and meaſures of the perſons ſuppos'd to govern; which it is very reaſonable to preſume there will be, among beings infinitely wiſe: And upon this account, admitting more Gods than one, I argued the poſſibility of their interfering, rather from the free and independent acts of their goodneſs, than from the reſolutions of their wiſdom, wherein their perfect unanimity and concurrence ſeems with much greater facility deducible.

As to that part of the argument, which makes ſupremacy a neceſſary character of an all perfect being, it ſeems to carry ſtill leſs weight and evidence in it [*]. Supremacy cannot be an abſolute or eſſential character of the divine nature; becauſe it is a relative term, and only ſuppoſes, that when God has made any thing, he has a right of dominion over it, but it does not follow, that if he had never proceeded to make any thing, or to operate externally, this attribute could in a proper ſenſe have belong'd to him. To ſay, that he muſt have been ſupreme, without his creating any thing dependent on him, is plainly to beg the queſtion, and proves nothing againſt the poſſibility of other independent beings, equal in power and every other perfection to him.

I have propos'd theſe uſual proofs of the unity of God, with that impartiality, which it becomes us always to obſerve in our ſearch after truth. But to diſcover the weakneſs of any argument in particular, which may be brought to prove a fundamental article of religion, is not, what ſome pious men have too much ſuſpected, to do religion diſſervice, but only ſhews it does not ſtand in need of any artifices, and has nothing to fear from a fair, ingenuous, and free examination.

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[*] Yet Biſhop *Burnet* in his expoſition of the thirty nine articles, p. 24. ſuppoſes this argument for the unity of God to carry with it the greateſt force and evidence. He ſpeaks of the other argument, concerning a poſſibility, that beings infinitely perfect, may be ſuppos'd to interfere, as to acts, of arbitrary goodneſs, after a manner, which imports greater diffidence and uncertainty: *So this argument ſeems ſtill of great force to prove the unity of the deity.* But when he comes to the argument for a ſuperiority of ſome one being over all other beings, he ſpeaks of it in terms, as if it admitted of a clear demonſtration: *A being therefore that has not all other beings inferior and ſubordinate to it, cannot be infinitely perfect: Whence it is evident, that there is but one God.*

CHAP. VII.

Of the vital attributes of God: And, firſt, Of the life of God in general.

THE life of any being may be ſaid in general to conſiſt in its having a motion or action proper to it, and which tends to advance, whatever perfection, or power it is capable of.

IN the loweſt ſenſe, life is attributed to things, which by a motion or action proper to them, are preſerv'd in their natural ſtate. We are to underſtand the ſcriptures, as, ſpeaking in this ſenſe, of *living waters*.

OF the next order, in the ſcale of life, are beings, the ſeveral parts whereof are adapted to perform their reſpective functions, and contriv'd in ſuch an admirable manner, as to render them capable of nutriment and increaſe. Under this diſtinction we place ſtones, to which life is alſo attributed in ſcripture, and minerals, but in a higher and more perfect degree, plants and trees: And it is to the mechanical, tho' inexplicable, motion, whereby the life of theſe families is preſerv'd, that we more eſpecially owe ſo many external beauties, pleaſures, and advantages of this viſible world.

BUT tho' plants and trees, which are of ſo admirable a construction and uſe, have their periodical ſeaſons of flouriſhing and bearing fruit; yet it is no leſs ſurprizing to obſerve, that when they are moſt of all diveſted of the appearances and operations of life, they have ſtill the principle of it abiding in them. Thus in the abſence of the ſun, or in proportion to the degrees of his receſs, and the decreaſe of his influence, they gradually appear to languiſh, to ſicken, and many of them, at length, to die; till in ſpring the latent powers of life being awaken'd by his nearer approach, and hearing the ſtill voice, as it were, of returning nature, unfold themſelves into a wonderful variety of beautiful and beneficial effects.

BUT in animals, the organs and offices of life are ſtill more curious and aſtoniſhing. We obſerve in them ſuch powers and motions as are much more difficultly accounted for, from any mechanical cauſe, or modification of their different parts; they move ſpontaneouſly from place to place, this way and that way, backwards and forwards; they feed, they grow, and ſeverally propagate their kind; they are acted by the impreſſion of diſtant and foreign objects; they diſcover not only all the capacities and operations of ſenſe, but the viſible effects of paſſion; of anger and love, of fear and revenge. Whether all theſe appearances may be accounted for from the infinite wiſdom of the divine architect, without our having recourſe to any plaſtick powers, or intelligent beings, in order to inform and direct them, this is not a proper place to enquire. Whatever hypotheſis we go upon, the wiſdom of God in forming and preſerving the ſprings of life, which is attended with ſuch variety of curious and regular movements in them, is equally the object of our admiration.

But when we aſcend yet a branch higher in the tree of life; when we conſider that noble being, call'd man, as a *living creature*; a new and freſh ſcene of wonder opens itſelf to us, and in ſuch a manner, as ſtill raiſes our admiration, and, at the ſame time, puts all mechanical cauſes entirely out of the queſtion. For here we are conſcious of a principle within us, whereby we are freely determin'd in our own motions, without regard to any ſenſible impreſſion from external objects, which ſome philoſophers think, whatever appearances any animals may have of ſenſation or reflection, all their motions may be truly reſolv'd into: Yet ſuppoſing even ſelf-conſciouſneſs in men might poſſibly reſult from any determinate ſcheme or conſtruction of the parts of matter, with all the other faculties of underſtanding and will, as, judging, deliberating, comparing things together, and making them the objects of our choice or diſlike; taking it for granted, I ſay, that all theſe operations of life could really be reſolv'd into certain, tho' to us unknown, laws of mechaniſm: It muſt however be acknowledg'd, that they diſcover the effects of a much more perfect life in man, than in any other viſible created being, and conſequently the wiſdom of the creation ſtill in a more eminent and conſpicuous manner.

Especially if we add, that by the faculties and action of the mind, from whatever cauſe or principle they proceed, man is diſtinguiſh'd from the reſt of the creation by a capacity of examining the grounds of piety and religion, and actually diſcovering a ſenſe of them to others. There is nothing of this obſervable in other creatures; whatever faint reſemblances they may ſhew in ſome inſtances of reaſon, there is not the leaſt appearance in them of any principle or ſentiments of religion; and therefore *Cicero* juſtly made this one of the diſtinguiſhing characters of man, in oppoſition to all other beings that have life, that he is a religious animal. By virtue of this faculty of his mind, which I conſider as a power flowing from the life of it, he is capable of having his converſation in heaven; of maintaining an intercourſe with God and the intelligible world; and carrying his views forward, upon material objects, diſtant beyond what imagination can fully reach, and greater than it can conceive: Nay, he has a power of forming to himſelf new ideal worlds, and then annihilating them again at pleaſure: In a word, he can ſpread himſelf, if I may ſo ſpeak, over the whole creation in a moment: He can climb up into heaven, and go down into hell, and fly to the uttermoſt parts of the earth at the inſtant he deſigns.

THESE are the admirable powers of life, as operating in man; and yet the angels, *which excell in ſtrength*, are ſtill ſuperior in all theſe vital and ſurprizing functions to him; beſides that they may probably have certain other modifications of life no leſs admirable, and concerning which we are not able to form any manner of idea.

BUT when by theſe ſeveral ſteps we aſcend to the original ſource and fountain of life, how infinitely more powerful and perfect muſt the operations of it ſtill be? Whatever vital powers we obſerve in the effect, they muſt of neceſſity be more eminently contain'd or imply'd in the cauſe. God only may be ſaid therefore in the ſtricteſt ſenſe to live, as operating independently, and having *life in himſelf*. Thoſe living creatures, which appear to be moſt free in their actions, and at the ſame time to act with the greateſt force, are only agents in ſubordination to him, to whoſe mere favour they entirely owe both their powers, and the capacity of having them continued. *He only hath immortality*. The perfection of his life renders it equally incapable of any diminution, or acceſſion. *He is the living God, and ſtedfaſt for ever* *. *As to his years, they ſhall not fail* †. *He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things* ‡. *In him, we live, move, and have our being* **. *His work is always perfect* ††. *He is mighty in ſtrength, and excellent in power* ‡‡.

UPON this tranſcendent excellency of his life, the ſcriptures peculiarly appropriate to him by way of diſtinction the name of the *living God*: And the moſt ſolemn act of religious worſhip, that of an oath, is particularly requir'd in conſideration and honour of this attribute: For hereby God does not only denote to us the perfection of his being and operations abſolutely; but in oppoſition to idols, and the vanity of worſhipping what has no life, nor any power of life or death. *They have mouths, but they ſpeak not*;

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* *Dan.* 6. 26. † *Heb.* 1. 12. ‡ *Acts* 17. 25. ** ——17. 28.
†† *Deut.* 32. 4. ‡‡ *Job* 37. 23.

eyes have they, but they ſee not; they have ears, but hear not, neither is there any breath in their mouths: And therefore the prophet *Jeremiah* makes it an argument, and it is an unanſwerable one, that God is the *true God,* becauſe he *is the living God,* and *an everlaſting King.* Accordingly the apoſtles exhorted the people of *Lyſtra,* to *turn from thoſe vanities,* to which their worſhip was directed, *to the living God, who made heaven and earth, the ſea, and all that therein is.*

WE are not, however, to ſuppoſe, that the life of God is the reſult of any previous compoſition, or union of certain powers modify'd and diſpos'd after a manner proper to produce it; but that it is entirely the ſame with his eſſence, without cauſe, or the concurrence of any thing accidental, or prior to it.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the happineſs of God.

FROM what has been ſaid concerning the life of God, the perfect and moſt conſummate felicity of his nature is clearly deduc'd: For the happineſs of every being conſiſts in the free, vigorous, and uninterrupted exerciſe of its faculties upon their proper object. If we could ſuppoſe, that the contemplation or enjoyment of any thing without could contribute to the happineſs of the divine nature, God as the cauſe of all other beings, and of all their powers and perfections, muſt neceſſarily take all that complacency in them, which they are capable of exciting.

BUT the goodneſs of his creatures *extendeth not to him;* he is infinitely, and abſolutely happy in the perfections and internal operations of his own nature; he is his own light, and his own object; and as nothing without him is capable of acting upon him, or diſturbing his action, he muſt be happy for ever without allay or intermiſſion, without mixture or meaſure: Happy in the contemplation and enjoyment of himſelf, as infinite underſtanding, and unbounded will can make him: He *is the bleſſed God* *; *the king eternal, immortal; the bleſſed and only potentate.*

FROM this perfection of God, I ſhall take occaſion to infer the credibility and happineſs of a future ſtate. As to the life which we now lead, conſidering the excellent powers and faculties of human nature, and that ſo great a part of our time paſſes away during the intervals of ſleep and inaction, we cannot properly be ſaid to live: For beſides theſe intermiſſions of life, the powers of our mind are far from operating in any of us, either with that force or facility, whereof they are in their own nature capable. To ſeek for the true life of the ſoul, any where in this imperfect ſtate, is to *ſeek for the living among the dead.* Thoſe who have gain'd the greateſt ſtrength, liberty, and extent of mind, know nothing in compariſon equal to the capacity of a reaſonable ſoul. It is worthy then of the wiſdom of God, all whoſe works are perfect, to conclude, that he has not created ſuch a being, only to expoſe the defects of his work, and the incapacity of it to attain the ends, for which it is naturally qualify'd; but that he will cauſe it to live and act one time or other, in a manner more agreeable to the natural powers and qualities of it. This concluſion ſeems equally neceſſary in honour to the wiſdom, and goodneſs of God: It appears reconcileable with neither, that he ſhould create man capable, and continually impreſs on him deſires, of attaining a ſtate of happineſs, which, if there be no future life, he can never poſſibly attain. It is much more reaſonable, and conſiſtent with our ideas of both theſe attributes, to believe, that he will, if we make a good uſe of our liberty, in his due time tranſlate us to a ſtate of happineſs, *where there is*, in his preſence, *fulneſs of joy, and at his right hand pleaſures for evermore.*

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* 1 *Tim.* 6. 15.

CHAP. IX.

Of the knowledge of God.

THAT God is an intelligent being, we infer not only from the idea of his perfection in general, but from what has been ſaid particularly with reſpect to his life, and happineſs; life without underſtanding, is only ſo in a lower and very imperfect ſenſe; but happineſs without underſtanding cannot be conceiv'd in any ſenſe.

WE farther conclude, that God is an intelligent being, from thoſe viſible faculties and effects of knowledge or underſtanding, that we obſerve in other beings, and which, ſince we are not able to account for the origin of them, from any material or mechanical cauſe, muſt have originally proceeded from ſome intelligent cauſe, and been contain'd in it, after a more perfect and eminent manner.

God has not only diſcover'd himſelf to be intelligent, by creating certain immaterial beings endow'd with intelligence; but alſo by forming the material beings he has created in ſuch an admirable order, and appointing them according to their reſpective powers or ſtations to ſo many admirable uſes: For 'tis impoſſible to account for any organical part of the world, much more for the conſtruction of the whole, and the ſubſerviency all things have towards the common good, upon any principles of mechaniſm, or ſcheme of fortuitous motion. But this conſideration having occurr'd before, it will not be neceſſary, that in proving the intelligence of the firſt cauſe, I ſhould inſiſt any longer on it; and therefore I ſhall directly proceed to conſider the object of divine knowledge; or what thoſe things are, to which it may be ſuppos'd to extend, and after what manner to conceive them.

I. In general, whatever may be known, or can be conceiv'd as an object of knowledge, is the object of divine knowledge. Now the diſtinction of beings primarily reſolving into that of the creator and the creatures, God muſt not only be ſuppos'd to have a perfect comprehenſive knowledge of himſelf, or his own eſſence; but of all his operations, and of all the real, I will add for a reaſon to be afterwards produc'd, all the poſſible effects of them.

1. God intimately and in the moſt perfect manner knows himſelf. *The ſpirit of God knoweth the deep things of God* *. His knowledge being one of his eſſential attributes, is neceſſarily as infinite and unlimited as his eſſence: It is alſo neceſſary to that perfection of happineſs, which we have attributed to him, that he ſhould perfectly know his own eſſence; ſeeing the happineſs of every intelligent being, as ſuch, muſt conſiſt in the free exerciſe of its underſtanding upon thoſe objects, which are moſt proper to it, and worthy of it. If God then do not perfectly know himſelf, or his own eſſence, with reſpect to his ſeveral powers and properties, he cannot be perfectly happy, as not having within the ſcope of his knowledge, the greateſt and moſt excellent object: Or if, in contemplating the perfections of his nature, he could be ſuppos'd to diſcover them only by a gradual progreſſion, or in part: His happineſs would ſtill be incomplete, in proportion as his knowledge is partial, and not commenſurate to its object.

But indeed that it is neceſſary God ſhould have in one entire view, a full, perfect, and adequate knowledge of his own nature and attributes, is evident from his having form'd a deſign of acting externally. To inſtance only in his attributes of wiſdom and power; if he did not in the firſt place perfectly know the capacity and extent of his wiſdom, in adapting cauſes to their effects, or the means to the end, he might have deſign'd a ſcheme of things without producing any wiſe effect, or attaining any end at all. And again, if he had not known the extent of his power, how wiſe ſoever he had been in projecting ſuch a ſcheme, there might not have been ſo much as a poſſibility of perfecting it. A conduct, which would argue greater imperfection, than is ordinarily obſervable in men, who have any reputation for wiſdom or contrivance: It being the general character of weak and inconſiderate perſons, to propoſe any end without deſigning the means proper to effect it, or to attempt any means, which it is not in their power to employ. A procedure, which the goſpel, to denote the great imprudence and inſignificancy of it, repreſents by that of a *King going to war*, without computing whether his force may be ſuperior to the oppoſition he expects to meet with; or of a man beginning *to build*, without taking an eſtimate of his growing expences, or conſidering whether he will be able to finiſh.

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* 1 *Cor.* 2. 11, 12.

2. IT is no leſs evident, that God has a perfect knowledge of all his works, and of all the real and poſſible effects, that can follow from their ſeveral operations. The neceſſity of his knowing their diſtinſt powers and eſſential properties, appears from his being the author of them. For ſince he did not create or form them by a blind incogitative power, but according to the reſpective ideas antecedently conceiv'd of them in his own mind; their nature and primary qualities muſt neceſſarily have been, and ſtill continue to be in every reſpect conformable to thoſe ideas. And, for the like reaſon, it appears, that their ſeveral motions and effects muſt be alſo perfectly known to him. For ſince he made them with faculties proper to move and operate, and that not fortuitouſly, but with deſign, and to wiſe ends: If he ſhould not know in what manner, and how far they might be capable of purſuing thoſe ends, he may be fruſtrated in his deſign of attaining them; and conſequently would appear in the formation of his creatures to have acted without any end worthy of himſelf, conſider'd either as the being that created and gave laws to them, or as having a right to govern and preſide over them afterwards. Theſe following concluſions therefore, had we no divine authority for them, ſeem plainly deducible from the principles of natural reaſon. *Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world**. *Neither is there any creature, that is not manifeſt in his ſight; but*

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* *Acts* 15. 18.

all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do *.

3. THE knowledge of God does not only extend to things actually exiſting, but to ſuch, as in the order of cauſes are to have a future exiſtence, whether depending on the operation of natural or moral agents.

As to things or events, which are to ariſe from a chain of natural cauſes, it is more eaſy to conceive how God ſhould at once perfectly ſee the whole ſeries or connexion from the beginning to the end of it: There is not much greater difficulty in apprehending this, than how a perſon moderately vers'd in aſtronomy, ſhould be able to calculate, for any determinate period, all the future Eclipſes of the ſun and moon. But the queſtion, which has been ſo much controverted by divines, is, how God can be conceiv'd to foreſee ſuch events, as depend upon the concourſe of moral agents, or the free determination of human will.

THIS difficulty will be conſider'd in another place; all I ſhall obſerve at preſent on occaſion of it, is, that tho' we ſhould not be able perfectly to ſolve it; yet there is a neceſſity of ſuppoſing things of a contingent nature certainly foreknown to God, in order to the vindication of a wiſe and regular œconomy in his governing the world. For ſince events, which are of the greateſt importance in relation to government, depend upon the conduct of free and reaſonable agents, ſhould not God foreknow which way they would take, he could not antecedently diſpoſe the order of things in ſuch a manner, as to over-rule their deſigns or actions, to many wiſe, and good, and juſt ends, which the authors of them never ſo much as thought of, much leſs intended; nay, which they had rather taken meaſures directly to fruſtrate: So that to effect thoſe ends, inſtead of purſuing a ſtanding ſcheme or project of government, God would be neceſſitated at every turn to interpoſe by an immediate, and miraculous power. Upon which ſuppoſition we ſhould be ſtill leſs able to account for the wiſdom or uniformity of his conduct; and one of the greateſt beauties of providence, which conſiſts in bringing good out of evil, and order out of confuſion, by an over-ruling power, would ceaſe to be the object of our admiration. The great art indeed of human government, conſiſts in knowing the tempers and inclinations of the people, and upon what meaſures they will moſt probably, in conſequence of them, proceed. This is as far, as the greateſt capacity of mind in human governors improv'd by the longeſt experience, can ordinarily extend. But could we ſuppoſe, that their probable conjectures of any dangerous attempts, could be timely improv'd to a certainty, how many wiſe diſpoſitions, without waiting for the iſſue of ſuch an attempt, might be proviſionally made towards meeting it, and drawing advantages from it, directly contrary to what it was intended to effect?

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* *Heb* 4. 13.

IF ſuch a foreſight would be highly neceſſary to human governors, to the end, they may better be enabled to judge, whether and to what lengths they ſhould ſuffer the authors of any dangerous enterprize to proceed in their deſigns, and when it might be moſt proper to detect them; much more are we to attribute to God, in honour both to the wiſdom, the goodneſs, and, I may add *, the juſtice of his conduct, ſuch a preſcience, which perfectly repreſents to him all future events, how contingent ſoever with reſpect to the cauſe, from which they may derive.

4. IT appears from what has been ſaid, that the knowledge of God extends to all things that have either an actual, or, in the gradual progreſs of cauſes, a future exiſtence. Upon which diſtinction, ſome have thought, that this attribute may be perfectly eſtabliſh'd: But others have concluded it neceſſary to the perfection of it, and not without great appearance of reaſon, that not only things actual and future, whether depending on natural or free agents, ſhould be the objects of divine knowledge; but alſo whatever effects may poſſibly reſult from them, or from their ſeveral combinations; to which they add, that whatever is a poſſible object of the power of God, tho' it never had, or can have any exiſtence in or by occaſion of the preſent order of things; yet on that account muſt be neceſſarily ſuppos'd an object of his knowledge.

IT is the more reaſonable to aſſert the knowledge of God in the former reſpect, ſince we find our ſelves capable of concluding on many occaſions, with ſo high a degree of probability, that we term it a moral aſſurance, what would have happen'd if either natural agents had been diſpos'd, or moral agents had proceeded after a different manner. Now if men may conclude from a ſuppoſition ſo well and ſtrongly founded, as ſcarce to leave any room for doubt or uncertainty, what things might have happen'd, tho' in fact they never did happen, certainly we ought to attribute this kind of preſcience in a much higher and more perfect, or rather

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* When I ſay, that we are to attribute the moſt perfect foreknowledge to God, in honour to the juſtice of his government, I by no means intend, as if he could not be ſuppos'd juſtly to diſtribute rewards and puniſhments, tho' the free actions of men were not really foreknown to him; but only, that by his prediſpoſing the order of things, and at length unfolding it, which he frequently does, in ſo ſurprizing a manner, his juſtice, as in the caſe of *Joſeph*, is more clearly manifeſted, and more apt to excite our admiration.

in the higheſt and moſt perfect degree to God, who is intimately acquainted with the natural powers of all cauſes; and conſequently ſees in the cleareſt light, which way they would act, and what effects produce upon any ſuppos'd change in the order or diſpoſition of them.

I obſerv'd farther, that the knowledge of God has been aſſerted to extend to all ſuch things, as are poſſible objects of power, without regard to the preſent ſtate of things, or any ſuppos'd tendency of them. If God do not know all things, which his * power may be able to effect, he would not know, what we have before prov'd the knowledge of neceſſary to him, the utmoſt perfection of his own nature; more eſpecially he would not know, what, of all other things he can be the leaſt ſuppos'd ignorant of, the ideas in his own mind; ſeeing his power does not act by a blind or fortuitous impulſe, but in a juſt and regular conformity to his ideas. This farther conſequence will alſo follow, from our ſuppoſing God not to know, whatever his power may be capable of effecting, that it would be poſſible for him, when he might come in certain caſes, to exert his power, to improve in knowledge, or to begin to know what he does not actually know already; as in creating, for inſtance, what the poſſibility of will not be deny'd, certain other beings, beſides thoſe he has already created, and with diſtinct powers and faculties from them.

Thus I have ſeverally conſider'd the principal objects of knowledge about which the divine mind is converſant, or whereunto it may be conceiv'd to extend: Except perhaps that in ſpeaking concerning the knowledge God has of his own nature, I omitted to mention his decrees, which without reſuming the queſtion, whether they be ſtrictly and entirely one with his eſſence, or only more immediate immanent operations of it, we are certain muſt be perfectly known to him: For the decree of God, is a decree of ſome end or deſign; but if he do not know what he has decreed, who ſhall direct or employ the means, which are moſt proper in the natural tendency of things, towards the execution of his deſign.

The only particulars, which remain to be conſider'd under this head are, how, and according to what order, all things are objected to the divine mind in ſo full and perfect a view.

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* *Le Blanc* has propos'd the argument for the neceſſity of God's knowing the extent of his power in a very clear manner. "*Deus propriam potentiam ignorare non poteſt;* "*nec poteſt propriam potentiam nòſſe, quin noverit ad quæ ſe extendat, Deus autem præter* "*ea quæ facit aut facturus eſt, infinita facere & producere poteſt; adeòque neceſſe eſt, ut di*"*ſtinctè cognoſcat infinita poſſe eſſe, & fieri, quæ tamen nunquam futura ſunt.* Theſ. "theol. p. 120.

WE are aſſur'd in the firſt place, that the manner wherein the objects of divine knowledge are preſented to it, is very different from that imperfect way, which we call diſcourſe or ratiocination; whereby we learn the nature and properties of one thing from the relation which it bears to another; and ſo are commonly forc'd to purſue a long train of conſequences, wherein too ſome latent fallacy often impoſes upon us, before we can come to any concluſion: A way, which is not only apt to tire us with its length, but is of itſelf too ſo toilſom and unpleaſant, that unleſs it be with reſpect to the knowledge of things tending to the preſervation or happineſs of the animal life, for in this ſearch we are generally leſs ſenſible to difficulties, few perſons have reſolution ſufficient to undergo the fatigue of it: Or if at firſt they proceed more reſolutely in it, yet afterwards finding the pain much greater than the pleaſure or light wherewith their labour is rewarded, they grow diſcourag'd in their lucubrations, and are eaſily induc'd to give them over.

THIS being one cauſe of the general prevalence, both of ignorance, and error among men, I ſhall add a word or two more towards explaining the reaſons of it. Every man would be knowing, and capable of making a right judgment in all things. Every man, at the ſame time, hath an invincible deſire to be happy, and would always be actually happy. Now actual happineſs, which is always attended with a ſenſation of pleaſure, being inconſiſtent with that actual pain, which the mind feels in the purſuit of knowledge; eſpecially in the firſt eſſays towards it, theſe two deſires muſt of neceſſity very often interfere: And the motion of that deſire, which carries a man towards knowledge, commonly proves too weak for that which carries him towards happineſs; a happineſs, that propoſes to him preſent delight and ſatisfaction. We are not then to wonder, if men have not always patience to undergo the labour of the mind, till they deſerve the recompence they ſeek after, or to follow a diſtant and imperfect view of truth, till they come gradually at laſt to the place of her habitation; but, on the other hand, chuſe rather to turn their thoughts from ſuch dry and difficult ſpeculations, upon the more ſubſtantial (for ſo the ſenſes and imagination never fail to repreſent them) and preſent pleaſures, or affairs of human life; while to others perhaps, who are of a lazy and indolent temper, it appears more eligible wholly to neglect the culture or improvement of their minds in any kind, and to paſs away their time in a courſe of vain and idle amuſements, or even as much as is poſſible, in thinking of nothing.

THESE reflections are not altogether foreign to my preſent ſubject or deſign, but tend to ſhew us, in a ſtronger light, the neceſſity of removing all ſuch defects from the divine mind, which render the means of acquiring knowledge ſo tedious and painful, and the poſſeſſion of it ſo very imperfect to men.

FROM all which conſiderations, this manner of defining the knowledge of God with reſpect both to the exerciſe and capacity of it, appears moſt agreeable to the infinite perfection of his nature, that it does not only take in the ſeveral ſpecies of beings, but all their relations, modes, powers, and properties, at once; and not as human underſtanding goes to work, by formal inferences or deductions from things more known, to things that are leſs known, or from an alternate compariſon of cauſes and effects, but by direct and immediate intuition *.

IF we would indeed ſtill aſpire towards having more diſtinct apprehenſions concerning the manner how things are objected to the divine mind, or conceiv'd by it, we ſhould rather conſult that operation of our own minds, which we call ſimple apprehenſion, than that which is term'd diſcourſe or argumentation. Nay, we may deſcend yet, in order to illuſtrate in ſome meaſure the ſubject of our enquiry, to a lower faculty of ſenſe, but the moſt noble and capacious of all the ſenſitive faculties, that of ſeeing. We experience, that the eye is capable of taking in a great variety of objects, and almoſt at an immenſe diſtance, ſeverally, and at once; tho' the paſſage at which they enter is very ſmall, and ſeems, in compariſon both of their magnitude, number, and their reſpective diſtances, wholly diſproportionate. We may from hence form ſome imperfect apprehenſions, how the immenſe God, who is every where preſent, and *whoſe eyes are in every place*, ſhould in one full immediate view, ſee the whole order of things, with their ſeveral powers and operations.

IT is from the diſtant reſemblance which ſight bears to the faculty of knowing in the mind, that by a common metaphor, it is ſo naturally us'd to expreſs knowledge; and that particularly in the holy ſcriptures, tho' the like forms of expreſſion are uſual in prophane authors, it is ſaid, that all things *are naked and open to the eyes of God*; that *he looketh unto the ends of the earth, and ſeeth under the whole heaven:* With a more eſpecial regard to man, that *he looketh on the heart, and ſeeth him in ſecret*; and that *there is no darkneſs, or ſhadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themſelves* from him.

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* This definition is highly agreeable both to the doctrine of the ſchoolmen, and the fathers, particularly that of St. *Auguſtin.* " *Deus non particulatim vel ſigillatim omnia vi-* " *det velut alternante conceptu hinc illuc, inde huc; ſed omnia videt ſimul.* De Trin. l. 15. c. 14.

As to the order, or thoſe diſtinct acts, which we attribute to the divine knowledge, to the end we may form more clear and diſtinct conceptions of it, divines have commonly ſuppos'd two, and many of them three ſeveral ways, whereby things are objected to the divine intellect, and apprehended by it.

1. THE firſt is that of *ſimple intelligence*, antecedent, in order of our conceiving it, to any act of the will; whereby in one clear, full, and naked view, God ſees himſelf and every other being, with all their modifications, and whatever effects they really ſhall, or may poſſibly produce in time.

2. THE other way is that of *viſion*, alluding to the objects of ſight, which muſt of neceſſity have an actual [*] exiſtence, for the eye cannot ſee what is not; this way is in order of our conception, poſterior to that act of the divine will, whereby God decreed whatever he would do or permit to be done, and which conformably to his decree, perfectly repreſents to him the ſeries and manner of their being done.

3. BUT it is alſo thought neceſſary to the perfection of the divine knowledge, and the reaſons for it have been ſufficiently eſtabliſh'd before, that we ſhould attribute to God, what divines call a *middle ſcience*, as falling neither directly under the one or other of the foregoing diſtinctions, but partaking in certain reſpects of both. What is objected in this way to the divine intellect, is not any thing really exiſting, or that has now a poſſibility of exiſting, but what might have happen'd on ſuppoſition God had eſtabliſh'd another ſcheme of things; and more eſpecially if moral agents had made another uſe of their liberty than they have now actually done. But this kind of knowledge concerning the poſſibility of what might have happen'd in time paſt, differs very little from that knowledge, and conſequently, from the order of it, wherein God ſees things that are poſſible in future time.

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[*] *Aquinas* has explain'd the reaſon of this diſtinction very well. " *Quædam verò ſunt, quæ ſunt in potentiâ Dei, vel creaturæ, quæ tamen nec ſunt, nec erunt, neque fuerunt; & reſpectu horum non dicitur habere ſcientiam viſionis, ſed ſimplicis intelligentiæ; quod ideo dicitur, quia ea quæ videntur apud nos, habent eſſe diſtinctum extra videntem. Prima primæ.* Quæſt. 14. artic. 9.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Of the wiſdom of God.

THE wiſdom of God may be defin'd his practical knowledge; and for this reaſon it may perhaps be thought, that we ſhould rather conſider it, under the head of his moral attributes, and as being converſant, for in that the idea of moral virtue conſiſts, about ſuch things, as are fit, or not fit to be done: Yet this attribute having ſo immediate a connexion with his knowledge, and following it in ſo natural an order of our ideas, I chuſe, according to the common method, to conſider it in that order, as an intellectual virtue, which yet preſides over all the other virtues, and directs the time when, and the manner how they ought to proceed and operate.

WE may ſay then, in order to our forming more diſtinct ideas concerning the knowledge and wiſdom of God, that his knowledge conſiders things by way of pure ſpeculation, abſolutely as they are, or as they may exiſt, with their reſpective powers, relations, and poſſibilities; his wiſdom conſiders things in order to operation; and whether, or upon his determining to act, at what time, and after what manner, ſo as to conduce moſt to the advancement of his honour and glory, they ought to be effected.

Now the ſame methods of arguing, whereby we prov'd the knowledge of God, naturally leads us, and with equal evidence and certainty, to prove this attribute of wiſdom.

1. IF we argue from the viſible effects of wiſdom, as communicated, after however imperfect a manner, to men, we muſt of neceſſity have recourſe to ſome firſt cauſe or original, wherein wiſdom more eminently reſides. This argument, I grant, does not directly prove the abſolute perfection of the divine wiſdom, but only that, upon the compariſon, God is wiſer than man; which conſidering the many defects of human wiſdom, that *the thoughts of the wiſe are but vain*, and that the affectation of being *thought-wiſe* *, diſcovers the higheſt *vanity*, man is capable of. Upon theſe, or the like conſiderations, we may be charg'd with doing no great honour to the divine wiſdom, in deducing the proof of it, from thoſe faint eſſays and appearances of wiſdom, which we are able to diſcover in men. To which I need not return any other anſwer, but that wiſdom, the perfection whereof

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* *Job* 11. 12.

will appear from other conſiderations, is in general, what I am only at preſent to ſhew, an attribute belonging to God: And in this way of arguing from the effect to the cauſe, *Cicero* concludes very juſtly, *man is wiſe, and therefore God is wiſe*[*]. An inference form'd upon the ſame rational grounds with the following paſſages in holy writ. *He that teacheth man knowledge, ſhall not he know*[†]? *Who hath put wiſdom in the inward parts, or, who hath given underſtanding to the heart*[‡]? *God giveth wiſdom to the wiſe, and knowledge to them that know underſtanding*[**].

2. IF we argue from the viſible effects of wiſdom, in the wonderful formation and order of things, we diſcover a farther neceſſity of accounting for them from the operation of a moſt wiſe and intelligent being: We obſerve that things are not only made with reſpect to the whole ſyſtem, according to the exacteſt ſcheme, and moſt conformable to geometrical proportion, which wiſdom could have contriv'd, in number, weight, and meaſure; but that there is not the leaſt organiz'd part of the creation, ſeparately conſider'd, wherein we do not diſcover a wiſe and curious contrivance altogether ſuperior to the moſt elaborate or poſſible effects of human art. The method I purſue obliges me here to repeat, what I have had occaſion to ſay in other words before: But there are, after all, no words or expreſſions, which repreſent the wiſdom of God, as conſpicuous in his works, in ſo ſtrong, ſo lively, but withal ſo natural a manner, as thoſe of the holy ſcripture in any of the reſpects I have mention'd.

IF we conſider the excellency or ſuperiority of divine wiſdom, in a comparative ſenſe, what words can be more proper to confirm this obſervation, than thoſe of the prophet *Iſaiah*? *Who hath meaſur'd the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with a ſpan, and comprehended the duſt of the earth in a meaſure, and weighed the mountains in ſcales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the ſpirit of the Lord, or being his counſellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counſel, and who inſtructed him in the path of* [††] *judgment, and taught him knowledge, and ſhewed to him the way of underſtanding*[‡‡]? The expoſtulations of holy *Job* on this occaſion are no leſs moving and elegant. *Who*, ſays he, *hath diſpos'd the whole world*[*]? *Behold God exalt-*

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[*] *Sapiens eſt homo, & proterea Deus.*

[†] *Pſal.* 94. 9, 10. [‡] —— 38. 36. [**] *Dan.* 2. 21.

[††] By *judgment*, is not here to be underſtood any moral or judicial act, but the practical knowledge of diſpoſing things after the moſt regular and beſt manner. What *Muſculus* obſerves upon the place is very juſt. " *Intelligitur per ſemitam judicii, ratio* " *rectè gerendæ rei. Vox judicii non eſt hic poſita, de ſcientiâ judiciariâ; ſed ſignificat quod* " *eſt rectum, & cum diſcretione prudenter factum.*

[‡‡] *Iſaiah* 40. 12, 13, 14. [*] *Job.* 34. 13.

eth with his power, who teacheth like him? Who hath enjoin'd him his way [*]*?* But one of the moſt entire and compleat eſſays upon the wiſdom of God, that is extant in the world, and compos'd with a ſpirit ſuitable to the greatneſs and ſublimity of the ſubject, is the twenty eighth chapter of this admirable author. *Where,* ſays he, after having produc'd many ſurprizing inſtances of it, *ſhall wiſdom be found, and where is the place of underſtanding?* Then proceeding to obſerve, that it is neither to be *found in the land of the living,* nor to be purchas'd, as he proves by a moſt beautiful and juſt induction of particulars, with the moſt rich and valuable effects of merchandize, he at length directs us, where we may ſeek for the original ſource of it. *God underſtandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof: For he looketh unto the ends of the earth, and ſeeth under the whole heaven. To make the weight for the winds, and he weigheth the water by meaſure, when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder.*

THE holy penmen are no leſs eloquent, when they ſpeak of the wiſdom of God, or deſign an illuſtration of it, conſider'd in a more abſolute ſenſe; tho' the forecited author diſcovers every where a peculiar happineſs in the beauty and boldneſs of his images; yet there is no part of his work, wherein he appears more deſirous to ſhine, than when he ſets himſelf to deſcribe the ſurprizing effects of divine wiſdom in the creation and order of things: He tells us, that *God alone ſpreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the ſea: He maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the ſouth: He doth great things paſt finding out; yea, and wonders without number* [†]. *Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again; he ſhutteth up a man, and there can be no opening; he witholdeth the waters, and they dry up; alſo he ſendeth them out, and they over-run the earth* [‡]. *He ſtretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing: He bindeth up the waters in the thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them. He hath compaſſed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end. The pillars of heaven tremble, and are aſtoniſh'd at his reproof. He divideth the ſea with his power; by his ſpirit he hath garniſh'd the heavens. Lo theſe are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him; but the thunder of his power, who can underſtand* [**]*?*

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[*] *Job* 36. 22, 23. [†] Ch. 9. 8, 9, 10. [‡] Ch. 12. 14, 15. [**] Ch. 26. 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.

It it is not neceſſary for me to recite all the beautiful and noble paſſages in the book of *Job* to this purpoſe; yet there is one of them, which in regard both to the ſtrong light, wherein it is repreſented to the mind, and the irreſiſtible force it has of penetrating the heart, I cannot here omit the recital of. The occaſion of it indeed was the greateſt and moſt weighty, which could poſſibly have happen'd, or can be conceiv'd. God is introduc'd, as *out of the whirlwind*, expoſtulating after this manner with *Job*, concerning the wiſdom of his works, in his own perſon. *Where waſt thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? Declare if thou haſt underſtanding. Who hath laid the meaſures thereof if thou knoweſt? Or who hath ſtretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof faſtned; or who hath laid the corner ſtone thereof? When the morning ſtars ſang together; and all the ſons of God ſhouted for joy: Or who hath ſhut up the ſea with doors, when it brake forth as if it had iſſued out of the womb*[*]*?* The whole chapter, with that which follows, is full of the ſame moving ſentiments and expreſſions, and ſeems to afford us a proper occaſion of juſtifying one of the ſtrongeſt images, which *Job*, or any other writer has made uſe of; and whereby he repreſents *his heart*, while he is contemplating the wonderful works of God, as being *mov'd out of its place*[†].

The royal prophet is alſo very copious, edifying, and ſublime upon this head, but I ſhall not make any citations from him; thoſe who, in particular, will conſult the hundred and fourth pſalm, will obſerve, with admiration, a moſt juſt and beautiful train of thoughts, in his diſplaying the manifold wiſdom of God, from the variety of his works, with their ſeveral properties, relations, and dependencies upon one another.

3. But how conſpicuouſly ſoever the wiſdom of God may ſhine in his works, yet all creatures being finite, and bearing no proportion to the cauſe from which they derive; we muſt ſeek for a direct proof of God's being infinitely wiſe, not in any thing, or all the things put together, without him, but in the infinite perfections of his own nature. If wiſdom be a perfection, the conſequence is clear to demonſtration, that it muſt be infinite in a being infinitely perfect. But beſides this general proof, that God is infinite in all his attributes, the infinity of his wiſdom ſeems neceſſarily to follow from that of his knowledge in particular. The reaſon, why wiſe men, as we ſometimes eſteem them, often diſcover great weakneſs in their ſchemes or deſigns, does always proceed, where there is no moral defect, either from their want of

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[*] *Job* 38. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

[†] Ch. 37. 1.

knowledge or attention. They cannot perfectly diſcover the properties, or ſee the ſecret ſprings, relations, and conſequences of things; and for that reaſon muſt inevitably on many occaſions make wrong judgments, and in purſuance of them, take wrong meaſures. Neither where men are naturally more capable of judging right, can they be always in a diſpoſition to attend to a long train of practical rules, or to examine and lay things together, with that care and application, which the nature of them may require. The mind, which by uſe and exerciſe has gain'd the greateſt ſtrength and liberty, yet cannot labour inceſſantly, or preſerve itſelf continually free from the incurſion of foreign thoughts and amuſements; eſpecially under any difficult or afflicting circumſtances of life, which above all other diſtractions, are apt to confound the ideas of the mind, and to render it incapable either of ſeeing things in a true light, or purſuing them in a proper and regular method.

BUT the perfection of the divine knowledge is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the like defects, whether we ſuppoſe them natural or incidental to men. As God perfectly knows his own eſſence, and all the powers and properties of things, with the whole ſeries of cauſes and effects; ſo he knows them with the greateſt facility, and without any poſſible interruption, at once. Nothing, therefore, can be ſuppos'd to hinder his wiſdom from being of the ſame extent in the operation of it, with his infinite knowledge.

THESE are ſuch notices of the divine knowledge and wiſdom, as by the natural light of our minds, we are in ſome meaſure capable of attaining to. Notices, which, tho' they do not perfectly enable us to comprehend theſe attributes, yet are ſufficient to evince the truth, and excite our admiration of them. But the force whereof cannot be expreſs'd in more proper or moving terms, than in thoſe of the [*] apoſtle, wherewith I ſhall therefore conclude this head. *O the depth of the riches, both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God; how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord; or who hath been his counſellor?*

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[*] *Rom.* 11. 33, 34.

CHAP. XI.

Of the will of God.

IN reſpect to the will of God, another of his vital attributes, two things are principally to be conſider'd; firſt, a power imply'd; ſecondly, the egreſs or reduction of that power into act. The power imply'd in the will of God, is that attribute of life, whereby we conceive him antecedently endow'd with a capacity of determining himſelf to do or decree what he pleaſes; the act of willing, is his free and effectual determination, by virtue, or rather, perhaps, it ſhould be ſaid, in conſequence of that capacity. There is indeed another acceptation of the will of God, whereby it is underſtood to denote the thing willed, or what he declares to be his will. But this diſtinction concerning the divine will, how frequent ſoever both in common uſe, and the holy ſcriptures, I ſhall but barely mention, as being foreign to the preſent purpoſe.

WHAT I chiefly intend, is to aſſert the perfect and abſolute freedom of the divine will, in all ſuch caſes, as would import no imperfection, upon our ſuppoſing it abſolutely free. For that God ſhould by an antecedent neceſſity in the reaſon of the thing, love himſelf, or will his own happineſs, is what the perfection of his nature invincibly requires; and his not being free to determine his choice either way, is no more an argument againſt the freedom of his will, than his not being able to deny himſelf, or to work contradictions, is an argument againſt the infinite extent of his power.

BUT tho' the operations of the divine life, are in certain reſpects, and, for the reaſon I have mention'd, neceſſary, as being eſſential to the divine nature; yet we can by no means infer from hence, that God is not abſolutely free in all his determinations or volitions concerning ſuch things, as are not eſſential to his nature, whether relating to the internal or tranſient acts of it.

THOSE indeed who make the decrees of God entirely and identically one with his eſſence, quite deſtroy the former of theſe diſtinctions, but, at the ſame time, they alſo deſtroy the freedom of his grace in ſuch decrees, and make them effects, not of a deliberate choice, but of the moſt abſolute neceſſity, that can be conceiv'd. If his eſſence be neceſſary, and his decrees the ſame with it, they muſt, by an unavoidable conſequence, have abſolutely one and the ſame neceſſary foundation.

We muſt admit the tranſient acts, as they are call'd, of the divine will, to be more evidently conſiſtent with the entire freedom of it, as they ſtill appear to be more accidental to the divine nature, and could not proceed by way of neceſſary or eſſential emanation from it: For then ſuch an emanation muſt not only have been eternal, but it had been abſolutely impoſſible for God to have form'd his creatures at any other time, or in any other order or manner, than he has actually done; nay, it would, upon this ſuppoſition, be impoſſible for him to interpoſe in the government of his creatures, by any different, or other directions of his will, than thoſe whereby he has been for ever neceſſarily determin'd.

But this is not the only reaſon, upon which we aſſert the freedom of the divine will, both as oppos'd to external coaction, or any neceſſary previous determination from within. We think that a power of chuſing the time, place, and manner of action, implies independency, and is in general attended with an idea of perfection. Thoſe who argue againſt liberty, from a ſuppos'd impoſſibility in the nature of the thing, will grant, I conceive, that were it really poſſible in the ſenſe, we contend for, it would be more eligible than neceſſity in their ſenſe. Now this very conceſſion, the reaſonableneſs whereof cannot be diſputed, argues liberty to be a perfection; and if ſo, it muſt belong to a being, whom our adverſaries, as to this point, ſome of them at leaſt, will not deny to be infinitely perfect; whatever ſophiſms, for they can be no other, may be brought againſt the poſſibility of it: Except it ſhould be ſaid, which would imply an impoſſibility indeed, that we may be capable of conceiving a perfection, which, in the nature of it, is incapable of ſubſiſting.

Freedom of will is not only in itſelf poſſible, which I ſhall ſhew more particularly, when I come to treat of human will; but there ſeems to be one caſe, wherein we muſt either neceſſarily allow, that God is perfectly free either to act or ſuſpend action, or elſe conclude, that he is incapable of coming to any reſolution. Suppoſe then that God, in his infinite wiſdom, and amidſt an infinite variety of deſigns, ſhould propoſe ſome end to himſelf, towards which he ſees two ways equally conducing; if he always act neceſſarily, and only in purſuance of ſome previous direction of his underſtanding, he cannot in this caſe proceed to any action at all: For the will having no motion of itſelf, and the underſtanding ſeeing no reaſon to take one way, rather than the other, it muſt remain for ever in a perfect ſuſpence, without inclining or determining itſelf either way.

Notwithstanding then God always chuſes to do, what is wiſe, and juſt, and good, and agreeable to the light of his underſtanding;

ſtanding; yet that light is not the neceſſary cauſe of his choice or action, both which he can ſuſpend, whatever ideas in his own mind may be proper to excite or occaſion them; but they are primarily to be reſolv'd, and herein the radical freedom of his will ſeems to conſiſt, into the power he has of acting or not acting conformably to thoſe ideas: Or if ſuch a caſe ſhould happen, where he might propoſe to effect any end by different means, the reaſonableneſs and propriety whereof, appear equal on both ſides, then his liberty conſiſts in the power he has of determining himſelf, as he pleaſes, on either ſide, without any other reaſon.

From all which we may form this concluſion[*], that the liberty of the divine will does not formally conſiſt either in a ſpontaneous motion of it, or an immunity from an external coaction, or even in a power of chuſing what reaſon in the laſt deciſion of it repreſents moſt eligible; for the freedom then would not lie ſo much in the will, as in the underſtanding, which the will would be neceſſitated to follow the determination of: But the freedom of the divine will imports ſo perfect and abſolute a freedom of choice, that all requiſite circumſtances being rightly diſpos'd for action, and the underſtanding having previouſly determin'd concerning the propriety or fitneſs of it, God may ſtill proceed at pleaſure to act, or may wholly ſuſpend action.

I ſhall only obſerve, that the terms in ſcripture concerning the perfect freedom of God's will, are highly agreeable to thoſe, wherein I have endeavour'd to repreſent the nature of it, in the foregoing concluſion. It is expreſs'd, by the *determinate counſel of God*[†], *the hand and counſel of God*[‡], *and the good pleaſure of God, which he hath purpos'd within himſelf*[**]. Expreſſions ſtrongly denoting his power and independency in all the determinations, upon which he proceeds to exerciſe the acts of his goodneſs towards his creatures, and which the apoſtle therefore very naturally repreſents by the power which the potter has over *his clay* *; than which no illuſtration in nature could have been contriv'd more apt to expreſs the power of a choice perfectly free from every thing, that might on any account be ſuppos'd previouſly to determine it.

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[*] I had not the author, to whom I owe this concluſion, by me, when I drew it up, but think my ſelf here oblig'd to cite his own words, which repreſent it in ſo much better a light. " *Libertas hæc, quia voluntatis proprietas eſt, perfectiſſima etiam in Deo, ſtatuere, neceſſe eſt. Ita ut non ſola ſpontaneitas,—ſecundùm quam Deus liberè dicatur velle, quondo id vult, quod ſibi libet aut lubet, ſpontaneitas enim ſumma eſſe poteſt neceſſitas; (ſummum enim bonum etiam ſponte amatur) nec ſola immunitas ab omni coactione, voluntas enim ut cogatur prorſus impoſſibile eſt; fieri enim non poteſt, ut voluntas nolit, quod vult, aut velit, quod non vult. Nec poteſtas eligendi aut ſequendi id omne, quod ratio conſultatione factâ, conducibilius judicat; ſive poteſtas, quam præcedit judicii differentia; ſic enim libertas voluntatis non eſſet, niſi extrinſeca quædam denominatio, quæ voluntati ab iſtâ judicii differentiâ tribueretur. Proinde non proprietas voluntatis, in qua iſta judicii indifferentia eſt.— Quid ergo? Neceſſe eſt ut libertas hæc dicatur eſſe ejuſmodi voluntatis perfectio; quâ fit, ut voluntas poſitis omnibus ad agendum requiſitis, & poſito quolibet judicio in intellectu, nihilominus tamen aliter poſſit agere; & aut hoc, aut illud agere.* Epiſcop. inſtit. theol. p. 305, 306.

[†] *Acts* 2. 23.

[‡] Ch. 4. 28.

[**] 'Ευδοκία τȣ̃ θεȣ̃. *Epheſ.* 1. 9.

Chap. XII.

Of the power of God.

Another vital attribute of God, which has an immediate connexion with that of his will, is power: And indeed of all other affections of life, power ſeems more eſpecially to conſtitute the idea of it, and is that, wherein we principally apprehend it to conſiſt.

The proof of this article, that *power belongeth unto God* †, depends upon his being the creator of all things, and his forming them reſpectively, in ſo great variety, according to the different magnitude, figure, and ſituation, from which ſo admirable an order of the whole ſyſtem reſults.

If in building this vaſt and magnificent temple to his honour, we could ſuppoſe him to have made uſe of any engines, or mechanical inſtruments, what notions muſt we have of the force neceſſary to raiſe even but one of the fix'd ſtars, and to place it at a diſtance, which is thought almoſt incredible, in its proper orb? What idea ſhall we be able to form of the hand, which faſhion'd it behind and before, and gave it in all reſpects the figure and dimenſions proper to it?

Thus if we argue, by way of alluſion to the uſual methods of erecting any ſtructure built by the hands of men, to that glorious and amazing ſtructure, whoſe maker and builder is God; we cannot avoid forming the ſtrongeſt apprehenſions of his power; eſpecially when we conſider, that he had no aſſiſtant, or ſubordinate agent in his work, but he *ſtretched forth the heavens* alone, *and ſpread abroad the earth* by himſelf ‡.

But if God, inſtead of making any previous diſpoſitions, or employing any inſtrumental means towards the conſtruction of his work, only *ſpoke, and it was done*; or with reſpect to the exiſtence of the ſeveral parts which compoſe it, *only commanded, and they*

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* *Rom.* 9. 21. † *Pſalm* 62. 11. ‡ *Iſaiah* 44. 42.

were created, this gives us ſtill a more lively and ſtrong idea of his power, than imagination can give, from any ſuppos'd uſe he might make of artificial tools, or, could a place have been found for fixing them, of the moſt prodigious machines.

YET ſome perſons, I know, have made it a queſtion, whether the world being finite, notwithſtanding the vaſt extent of it, the greatneſs, the diſtance, and diſpoſition of its ſeveral nobler parts, the infinite power of God can be directly concluded from the formation of it.

To which it is anſwer'd, that if by the formation of the world be only underſtood the order wherein it ſubſiſts, tho' there are moſt ſtupendous effects of power conſpicuous in it, yet we cannot from hence abſolutely infer infinite power. But if by the formation of the world be imply'd the bringing things which were not into a ſtate of exiſtence, this ſeems a more direct proof of the infinity of ſuch a power in the utmoſt extent of the word; there can be no reaſon given why the power of God, whereof all things are the effect, ſhould be limited or reſtrain'd from doing any thing. A power of giving exiſtence to that, which had none before, being evidently every where the ſame, what ſhould hinder, according to any poſſible conception we can form, but that God may exert his power towards creating more worlds in any extramundane ſpaces, as well, and with equal facility, as he exerted it in that part of ſpace, wherein the preſent world was created?

IF it ſhould be true then, that a power leſs than infinite might have form'd a finite world; yet it does not follow, that a power leſs than infinite could have created a finite world: A power of creating things, is ſuch a power as neither ſtands in need of any inſtruments to work with, there being nothing antecedently to work upon, nor whoſe action can poſſibly be hinder'd, there being nothing to oppoſe it.

BUT might it not do diſſervice to religion, even to ſuppoſe any power leſs than infinite capable of forming the world? To this I anſwer, that an infinite power in the nature of the thing, cannot be directly concluded from a finite effect, tho' a finite effect may proceed from the action of a being infinitely powerful: The exerciſe of whoſe power, being under the direction of his free will, he is not always oblig'd to act according to the utmoſt force and extent of it: Yet ſo far natural reaſon may certainly conclude from this wonderful ſyſtem of things, that if it be not the immediate effect of God's power, it muſt be immediately, at leaſt, the effect of a power deriv'd from him, and acting in ſubordination to him, whereby all the ends and purpoſes of religion will be equally ſav'd.

HOWEVER, the direct proof of omnipotence ſeems rather to ariſe from a power of creating things out of nothing, than from the moſt admirable conſtruction of them: And there is this peculiar in the conſideration of a creative power, that whereas we muſt have recourſe to the infinite perfection of the divine nature in general, to prove the infinite perfection of certain particular attributes of God, of his knowledge and wiſdom, for inſtance, which cannot be fully demonſtrated from their effects; yet this attribute of infinite power ſeems clearly, and by direct conſequence, demonſtrable, from that effect of it, which I have mention'd.

THE object of divine power is every thing, which can be conceiv'd poſſible to any power, or that does not either in its own nature imply a contradiction, or ſome plain repugnancy to the perfections of the divine nature.

1. THINGS which in themſelves imply a contradiction, as that a fact, which has been, may not have been, or that a body may be extended and not extended, in a place and not in a place, at the ſame time: Such things, I ſay, do not import the leaſt defect in the divine power, from the natural impoſſibility of their conſiſtence. Nay, the very ſuppoſition, that any power might work contradictions, would deſtroy the very idea and proof of that power; for then ſuch a power, by parity of reaſon, may be, and yet may not be. It is therefore ſo far from being a diminution to the divine power to aſſert the impoſſibility of its extending to things in their own nature contradictory, that we are oblig'd to aſſert ſuch an impoſſibility, even in honour and vindication of the divine power.

2. NEITHER can any thing be ſuppos'd poſſible to the power of God, that is repugnant to his other perfections; as that he ſhould deny himſelf, or create innocent beings, with an intention of maing them eternally miſerable: To aſcribe a power to God of doing any thing inconſiſtent with the eternal rectitude of his nature, is not to render his power the object of greater admiration, which is the deſign of thoſe, who think no limitations whatever can be ſet to it, but to give us more narrow and unworthy conceptions of it. For ſuch a power, would in the exerciſe of it, were that poſſible, plainly imply, not a perfection, but a moſt notorious defect. Beſides, that a power, whoſe operation is contrary to the brighteſt ideas we have of the divine attributes, cannot be a power acting in ſubordination to the will of God, or under the regulation of his wiſdom, but a power without reaſon, and without any imaginable cauſe, foreign or internal, of its action. In a word, ſeeing all the attributes of God are eſſentially the ſame, a power in him, which tends to deſtroy any other attribute of the divine nature, muſt be a power deſtructive of itſelf.

I ſhall only add in reference to both the foregoing conſiderations, that if God either can work contradictions, or do any thing inconſiſtent with his own eſſential perfections, all the motives of credibility or faith, ſuppoſing he has made a revelation of his will to mankind, would be quite overthrown. If what may be, may not be, we can have no aſſurance that he has made any ſuch revelation; or if he has reveal'd his will, yet if he be capable of acting contrary to the eſſential perfections of his nature, in particular that of his veracity, what he has reveal'd may, after all, not be his will, but directly contrary to it.

OTHERS have been no leſs injurious to the power of God, in ſuppoſing it defective, thoſe who deny that God cannot poſſibly do any thing, but what he does, or in any other manner, and maintain that all things come to paſs by a ſeries of cauſes, which it is not poſſible for him to alter or obſtruct, narrow our conceptions of his power, as others would extend them too wide. Our prayers, upon this ſuppoſition, were it not abſolutely inconſiſtent with that liberty of the divine will, which we have aſſerted, would be only a more ſolemn inſignificant ſacrifice. If we pray, for inſtance, and the reaſon equally holds, as to any prayer of petition, for the removal of ſome impending evil, either it is in the power of God to remove it, or it is not; if it is not, our prayers are to no manner of purpoſe; if he can remove the evil we deprecate, and yet is neceſſarily determin'd in his actions, it would of neceſſity be remov'd, whether we ſhould pray to him to that end, or not.

THIS attribute of power being proper to poſſeſs our minds with the greateſt ſentiments of the divine majeſty, and to give us the moſt awful impreſſions of a religious fear and reverence, the holy penmen every where ſpeak of it in magnificent and ſuitable terms. *In the Lord Jehovah is everlaſting ſtrength, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth* *. *Declare his glory among the heathen, his marvellous works among all nations: For great is the Lord, and greatly to be prais'd; he is alſo to be fear'd above all gods. For all the gods of the people are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Glory and honour are in his preſence, ſtrength and gladneſs are in his place. Give unto the Lord ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and ſtrength* †. But no words can exhibit a more ſtrong or lively image of the power of God, than thoſe of the prophet *Iſaiah*. *Behold, the nations are as a drop of the bucket, and are counted as the ſmall duſt of the balance. Behold, he taketh up the iſles, as a very little thing: All nations before him are as nothing,*

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* *Iſaiah* 26. 4. *Rev.* 19. 6. † 1 *Chron.* 16. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28.

and they are counted to him leſs than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God, or what likeneſs will ye compare unto him *?

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CHAP. XIII.

Of the moral attributes of God in general.

THE proper notion of a moral agent, is, that he acts, or ought to act, in conformity to ſome law; as the obſervance whereof would be attended with a certain dignity and eaſy ſtate of mind, ſo ſhame and diſorder would be the natural conſequences of violating it.

Now tho' God, as the ſupreme Lord and creator of all things, cannot be preſcrib'd to, or directed by any thing without himſelf; yet his own nature, in the eſſential perfection of it, is an eternal and inviolable law to himſelf.

AND in this reſpect indeed there is a conſiderable difference, between the moral obligations of men, and thoſe actions of a moral nature, which we attribute to God. Man may have ſeveral commands impos'd upon him, under the character of a moral agent, concerning things, which are not antecedently founded in any moral reaſon, but depend wholly on the poſitive and arbitrary will of God. The right of creation and government gives the ſupreme being a power of enjoining ſuch indifferent things, tho' he ſhould not aſſign, or we be able to diſcover any explicit reaſons for them. But there are other things depending on the eternal rules of reaſon, the univerſal and ſovereign law, whereby all intelligent beings are, or ſhould be govern'd, that have the force of a moral obligation in them, I would be underſtood in a becoming ſenſe, both to God and man: For reaſon is the law of order, which determines what is right or wrong, good or evil, decent or diſagreeable; the law, which God himſelf invincibly loves and follows, and without which we could have no notion worthy of him as God.

AND whereas God poſſeſſes reaſon in the higheſt and moſt perfect degree, and there can be no cauſe within or without him to obſtruct its operations, he muſt in all his moral actions, purſuant to the light of it, be proportionably, and in the moſt perfect degree, a moral agent. Except it ſhould be ſaid, which indeed ſome men have been ſo unreaſonable as to ſay, that the diſtinction of right and wrong, good and evil, decent and unbecoming, does not ariſe from any antecedent principles of reaſon, but merely from poſitive ſubſequent inſtitution; which would be in effect to affirm, that there is really no ſuch thing as reaſon: For not to anticipate, what I am to ſhew at large under one of my general heads, if we do not clearly ſee the natural reaſon of diſtinguiſhing between theſe things, there appears to be nothing which we can certainly conclude from any method of reaſoning.

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* *Iſaiah* 40. 15, 17, 18.

BUT how tranſcendent ſoever the moral perfections of the divine nature may be, when compar'd with thoſe of men, or any other intelligent beings, there appears no evident reaſon, why we ſhould conclude, as a great * prelate has done, that the moral attributes of God are of a different nature from thoſe we obſerve in men. For we conſider things as of a different nature, not which are different in degree, but which differ in kind. Now if the reaſons of juſt, good, and fit, have the ſame foundation in the divine, that they have in a human mind; or, in other words, if it be reaſonable, that God, when he determines himſelf to act, ſhould do what is agreeable to the general rules of juſtice, goodneſs, and prudence, then thoſe reaſons or rules, with the proper acts ariſing from them, are the ſame in reſpect both to God and man in the relations, how much ſoever they may differ in the degrees of perfection.

AGAIN, if the moral attributes of God be not founded in the ſame general reaſons with thoſe of men (and if they be ſo founded, the nature of them is ſtill the ſame) then it would be impoſſible for us to form any diſtinct notions of the divine attributes, or rather any notions at all, but what would be very irregular and confus'd. For they being no farther of a moral conſideration, than as we apprehend them reaſonable in themſelves, if we do not know what common reaſons to reſolve them into, we at once deſtroy the morality of them, and all poſſible methods of reaſoning upon them. What grounds, I ſay, can we have upon any principles of natural religion to attribute certain perfections to God, whereof we are not able to diſcover any natural reaſon; which yet it is impoſſible for us to do, without knowing what they are, in ſome imperfect manner at leaſt, in their own nature.

I ſhall only add, ſince I am arguing on occaſion of what has been advanc'd by a learned perſon in one of the firſt ſtations of the church, that when God refers it, our ſelves being judges, whe-

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* The Archbiſhop of *Dublin*, in his ſermon preach'd before the Lord Lieutenant.

ther his *ways are not equal*, if we are not to judge concerning the equality of them, according to our common notions of what is juſt and right, the deſign of ſuch an appeal would be altogether impracticable. Neither could we be capable, as both reaſon and his poſitive commands require we ſhould, of imitating his perfections, did we not know, wherein his perfections conſiſt; an unknown object of imitation evidently implying as great an inconſiſtency, as an unknown object of deſire.

These reflections, I hope, will not render me obnoxious to any charge of being wanting in a juſt deference to the archiepiſcopal character; my deſign in them is only to prevent ſuch ill effects, as a great name recommended with much erudition may have, towards miſleading us in our reaſonings upon the moral perfections of God; in the clear and diſtinct conceptions whereof, the only ſolid foundation is laid, both of faith in him, and obedience to his laws: For want of which therefore, very great errors in doctrine, and corruptions in practice, have been too frequently occaſion'd.

We grant indeed there are certain moral virtues in men, for inſtance, ſobriety, temperance, and chaſtity, which, as they imply ſome defect in the reaſons of them, are by no means to be attributed to the moſt perfect being. But yet even ſuch qualities are founded in this general reaſon of a moral action, that they are agreeable to the preſent ſtate of man, and neceſſary to his perfection. As the moral attributes of God are conformable to the eternal reaſon and perfection of his own nature; ſo theſe virtues, tho' only of a more accidental conſideration, are term'd moral in men, as they are reaſonable in regard to the preſent condition of human nature, and, in their direct tendency, perfective of it.

Chap. XIV.

Of the holineſs of God.

When we deſcend to conſider the moral attributes of God more diſtinctly, that which naturally occurs firſt to our thoughts, the preſiding attribute, if I may ſo call it, which has the moſt general influence and direction over all the reſt, is holineſs; which we therefore indifferently expreſs by purity; a term, denoting the whole being, to which it is apply'd, perfectly free from all allay and pollution whatever, and not only in relation to certain parts, which may be conſider'd as entring into the conſtitution of it.

BUT tho' the holineſs of God denotes the purity and rectitude of his nature in general, in oppoſition to every thing that may not conſiſt with the abſolute perfection or ſimplicity of it; yet we more eſpecially underſtand by his holineſs, his hatred to ſin, and an utter impoſſibility, that he ſhould either be the author of it, or take the leaſt complacency in it; and, by conſequence, as was inſinuated before, whatever diſcovery he may make of his will to mankind, whether by the common light of natural reaſon, or by a ſpecial revelation, they muſt be ſuch as are at once moſt agreeable to our notions of holineſs in him, and tend moſt effectually to promote it in our ſelves: For otherways his action, which his wiſdom, as well as holineſs, requires it ſhould do, would not bear the character of his attributes.

I ſhall conclude this head, with citing ſome proper paſſages out of the ſcriptures, which attribute holineſs to God, in the ſeveral reſpects I have mention'd. And,

1. IN a more abſolute ſenſe. *The Lord is an holy God* *. *Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hoſts* †. The repetition from whence ſome learned men have endeavour'd to deduce the doctrine of the Trinity, implies at leaſt to human apprehenſion, ſome peculiar eminency, or more general extent of this divine attribute, which is therefore mention'd in another place, as that wherein the divine glory eſpecially conſiſts. *Who is like unto thee, O Lord, amongſt the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holineſs* ‡?

2. As it denotes God's hatred to ſin. *He is a jealous God, viſiting iniquity* **. *He is*, upon the provocation of ſin, *a conſuming fire* ††. *He hateth all the workers of iniquity* ‡‡. *Far be it from God that he ſhould do wickedneſs, and from the almighty, that he ſhould commit iniquity* *.

3. As God cannot, by way of communication, be the author of ſin. *The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works* †. *God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man* ‡. *Say not thou, 'tis through the Lord I fell away, for thou oughteſt not to do the thing, that he hateth: Say not thou, he hath cauſed me to err, for he hath not need of the ſinful man* **. In which words it is not only imply'd, that God cannot be the author of ſin, but two expreſs and unanſwerable reaſons are aſſign'd,

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* *Joſh.* 24. 19.
† *Iſaiah* 6. 3.
‡ *Exod.* 15. 11.
** *Exod.* 20. 5.
†† *Heb.* 12. 19.
‡‡ *Pſal.* 5. 5.
* *Job* 34. 10.
† *Pſal.* 145. 17.
‡ *James* 1. 13.
** *Ecclus* 11. 12.

why it is impoſſible for him to be ſo. The only occaſion, upon which we can be ſuppos'd capable of ſeducing other perſons to ſin, is either from ſome innate love to it, or ſome accidental advantage we propoſe to our ſelves by their criminal compliance. Theſe cauſes not being incident to God in either reſpect, as the wiſe ſon of *Syrach* argues very juſtly, neither can the effects of them be attributed to him.

4. As God cannot take complacency in ſin. *He is not a God, that hath pleaſure in wickedneſs, neither ſhall any evil dwell nigh him* *. *He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity* †. *The ſacrifice, the way, the thoughts of the wicked, are an abomination to him* ‡.

5. WITH reſpect to the holineſs of his law, whether natural or reveal'd. *Every word of God is pure* **. *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the ſoul* ††. *The law of God is holy; and his commandment holy, and juſt, and good* ‡‡. I am ſenſible theſe expreſſions primarily refer to the reveal'd law of God; but it being one great end of revelation to eſtabliſh the principles of morality, upon an expreſs divine authority, and to propoſe them in a clearer light, than that wherein natural reaſon was able to diſcover them in a ſtate of general corruption; our Saviour having moreover declar'd, that he came not to *deſtroy the law*, the moral and immutable law of nature, *but to fulfil it*: Thoſe expreſſions, which ſpeak of the purity and holineſs of God's word, can by no means exclude that natural law, which is writtten on our hearts, and according to the dictates whereof, thoſe *who have not the reveal'd law* *, are to be judg'd by a holy and juſt God.

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* *Pſal* 5. 4.
† *Heb.* 1. 13.
‡ *Prov.* 15. 8, 9, 26.
** *Prov.* 30. 5.
†† *Pſalm* 19. 7.
‡‡ *Rom.* 7. 12.
* *Rom.* 2. 15, 16.

Chap. XV.

Of the juſtice of God.

THIS attribute of God differs from his holineſs, only as a leſs general from a more extenſive and common principle. The holineſs of the divine nature denotes the eternal purity and rectitude of it, abſolutely conſider'd, whether God had deſign'd to act externally or not: His juſtice is principally conſider'd in reference to his deſign of acting externally, and the manner wherein he will proceed with thoſe beings produc'd by his action, that are proper objects of juſtice. And in this order we can only rank intelligent beings, or beings, if there really be any ſuch, without intelligence, that are capable of happineſs or miſery, of pleaſure or pain. As to all other creatures, the creator has an abſolute power to diſpoſe of them at pleaſure.

But the caſe of intelligent beings, in reſpect to that capacity in them, I have mention'd, of being render'd happy or miſerable, is very different: For it cannot, according to any ideas, we have, of what is juſt and right, conſiſt with the eternal rectitude or juſtice of the divine nature, that God ſhould create beings with an intention of making the miſeries of a ſtate, to which he conſigns them, greater, than the enjoyment or complacency, they can poſſibly take in it.

The metaphyſical notion concerning the goodneſs and excellency of entity, or being in general, from which ſome learned men have endeavour'd to prove, as well as they could, that it were better, upon the whole matter, to be miſerable, than not to be at all, is of too nice and ſubtle a contexture, to be oppos'd to thoſe arguments, which we may draw from experience, concerning any ſad or grievous calamity, even in this life, ſuppoſing the continuance might be for ever perpetuated to us. The damn'd will reap very little conſolation in the flames of hell from ſuch dry maxims; when even here a ſenſe of pain, at the moment it is felt in any violent degree, generally proves too ſtrong for the moſt curious and refin'd ſpeculations.

God indeed, as the creator of intelligent beings, has a right to treat them after what manner he thinks fit, provided what they ſuffer does not exceed the benefits of their creation. When their happineſs or miſery, their pain or pleaſure, are but in a reciprocal proportion to each other, they have no reaſon to complain; the juſtice of God ſeems however, ſtrictly ſpeaking, to be ſafe, tho' it may be more difficult, perhaps, to account for his wiſdom, and eſpecially for his goodneſs, in creating them. But where any creature is originally deſign'd to be miſerable, and form'd for that very end and purpoſe, how does the right of ſuch a procedure appear? Not from any conſideration of juſtice; for it is plainly, all circumſtances conſider'd, injurious (and in that the notion of unjuſt formally conſiſts) to the being created, and renders the deſire, were that poſſible, of having never been, much more eligible to ſuch a being.

Neither can the right of this arbitrary power proceed from the tranſcendent excellency of the divine nature; for that denoting an external reſpect to the creatures, preſuppoſes their exiſtence, and cannot therefore primarily found a right over them, but only in conſequence of their exiſting, and the prior right of creation.

Much leſs does a power ſeem to ariſe to God of rendring his creatures miſerable, from any notions we are able to form of his goodneſs: For this requires, that all benefits whatſoever conferr'd by him, ſhould at leaſt be ſuperior, either at the time of his conferring them, or in their natural conſequences, to ſuch evils, as he may ſee cauſe to inflict.

The right therefore which God has over intelligent beings, conſider'd as ſubjects of happineſs or miſery, muſt originally be founded upon the benefits, which as creatures, they derive from him, and the proper motives to gratitude and ſubjection ariſing from thoſe benefits.

In the natural and common ſenſe of mankind, a benefit confers an obligation, and gives the benefactor ſtill a greater intereſt in the party oblig'd, according to the greater degree or value of it. Upon this principle, the ties of our ſubjection, whether to our natural parents, or to our common parent, the civil magiſtrate, are render'd ſo much the more binding, and the ſeveral acts of diſobedience to them, tho' in caſes, wherein we are requir'd to be paſſive, bring upon us a heavier charge of impiety and injuſtice. But the benefits we have receiv'd from God, being ſo much greater, than thoſe, we could be capable of receiving from men, and to which indeed we owe the very capacity of being oblig'd by them, the reaſons of our ſubjection to him, are evidently ſo much the more ſtrong and inviolable.

Here then we have a natural and obvious reaſon for that right of God, which ſubjects mankind to his power and dominion; and, by virtue of which, he may, with the ſafety of his juſtice, inflict many temporary, and medicinal pains upon them; but not ſuch, as would render their being or condition more unhappy, than if they had never been: For that would not only deſtroy all the ideas we have of his juſtice, but all the reaſonable motives, from gratitude, of ſubjection to his will. When therefore the power of God over mankind is repreſented by that of a *potter over his clay*, we are not to extend the compariſon farther, than the foundation of it will allow. It argues indeed, that as the potter can form of his clay one veſſel to honour, or a more conſiderable uſe, another to diſhonour, or a meaner uſe; ſo God is perfectly free as to all the diſpoſitions of his goodneſs, and can diſtribute either his temporal bleſſings, or ſpiritual graces to men, after what manner, and in what different meaſure he pleaſes. In purſuance of which diſtribution, ſome perſons ſhall in both reſpects be viſibly ſuperior to others. But the conſideration of juſtice being, as we obſerv'd before, very different from that of goodneſs, and the clay in the hands of the potter, being in no ſenſe an object of juſtice, or capable of ſuffering, no argument can be drawn from the power, which the potter has over it, in prejudice of the divine juſtice.

To ſupport this notion of a power in God to effect the deſtruction * of his innocent creatures, for under that character I here conſider them, men have been driven to eſpouſe another moſt dangerous error; that things are not good or evil, antecedently to God's will, but only becauſe he wills them to be ſo. As *des Cartes* therefore aſſerted, that if God had eſtabliſh'd another order of ideas in the underſtanding, what is now demonſtrably true, might have been demonſtrably falſe; theſe men contend, that whatever now is morally juſt, might, if the will of God had ſo order'd or determin'd it, have been in the nature of it unjuſt. In ſhort, that he might not only have inſtituted another form of worſhip, but one directly contrary to the form he has inſtituted; that he might have render'd it lawful to lie, and even to blaſpheme; and that it depended wholly on his will, and not on the reaſon of the things commanded, that he did not give us ten commandments, the very ry reverſe of thoſe, which he has preſcrib'd for the government of our lives and actions[†].

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* As I would carefully avoid all equivocal terms, it may not be improper to obſerve, that by *deſtruction*, I do not here mean an extinction of being; God may in ſtrictneſs of juſtice, and if there be no other reaſon to reſtrain him, annihilate his creatures at pleaſure: But I mean, according to the ſenſe, wherein the word is ſometimes us'd in ſcripture, a ſtate of pain and miſery; a ſtate to which the conſigning innocent creatures, would be to do them an injury, without an equivalent. A ſuperior may, in certain caſes, deprive a dependent of privileges, held by his favour; but ſhould he make ſuch a dependent, and without any provocation, more unhappy, than all the benefits he has done him, or ever deſigns him, can compenſate for; how could we reconcile ſuch a conduct with our common notions of juſtice? Would it not rather tend to give us an idea of cruelty; an idea, of all others, moſt ſhocking to the human, and repugnant to the divine nature.

BUT I have already obviated the principle, from which theſe impious conſequences are drawn, by what I have ſaid concerning the moral perfections of God in general; I ſhall only add, that if nothing be morally good or juſt in its own nature, but only in conſequence of the divine will, juſtice and goodneſs would be perfections, not eſſential, but purely accidental to the divine nature; becauſe upon this hypotheſis, it depended on the free and ſole determination of God's will, whether he would be good and juſt, or otherways. And what if his will had not ſo determin'd?

BUT the power of God over his creatures, as ſuch, is not the only rule of his juſtice, in dealing with them. He has authority to preſcribe ſuch laws to them, as are for their benefit and advantage, and to which he may give the ſanction of proper rewards and puniſhments; all governors having a right of obliging their ſubjects to obey thoſe laws, which are really for their own happineſs; to puniſh the violation, and to reward, if they ſee fit, the obſervance of them. The law, which God has preſcrib'd for the government of mankind in general, is that of natural reaſon and conſcience, which, if they violate, they juſtly render themſelves obnoxious to puniſhment; and the foundation, upon which juſtice proceeds in puniſhing them, is, that this law is not only reaſonable in itſelf, and moſt conducive to their preſent and future happineſs, but they are convinc'd by the natural reports of their own minds that it is ſo, or at leaſt may be convinc'd by giving a due attention to them. Thoſe words of the apoſtle, *The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and juſt, and good,* are the ordinary language of that maſter, if we will but hear him, who ſpeaks continually within us: But if we will not hear him, the reaſons of juſtice will ſtill be viſible in puniſhing the wilful contempt of his authority. The words again of *Moſes*, if they do not primarily refer to the moral law, the eternal law of all rational beings, yet are properly applicable to every perſon, tho' living in a mere ſtate of nature. *The commandment, which the Lord thy God commands thee this day, is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off: It is not in heaven, that thou ſhouldſt ſay, who ſhall go up for us*

[†] This is the doctrine, for which *Curcellæus*, in his diſſertation againſt *Amyrald*, cites the very words of *Szydlovius*; and tho' moſt of the *Calviniſtical* writers have expreſs'd themſelves concerning the power of God over innocent creatures, with greater caution and modeſty, than this author of hard name; yet it would not be difficult to prove, by a plain and clear deduction, that thoſe, who believe, God has antecedently to his foreſight of what men would do, condemn'd them to everlaſting flames, muſt unavoidably ſee, and tacitly at leaſt aſſent to the like conſequences.

to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the ſea, that thou ſhouldſt ſay, who ſhall go over the ſea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayſt do it *.

Here then is a new ſcene of juſtice open'd to us, which repreſents mankind no longer as objects of the divine juſtice in a perfect ſtate of innocence, but as moral agents, capable of being puniſh'd or rewarded, according to their good or evil actions.

Yet even upon this view, tho' ſome men do by an ill uſe of their liberty render themſelves miſerable; miſerable to ſuch a degree, that it had been happy for them, if they had never been born; we are aſſur'd, for that reaſon, their deſtruction is of themſelves, and they have, notwithſtanding, theſe rational grounds to conclude, it is the will of God *all men* ſhould be *ſav'd*, and come to repentance, that he bears long and patiently with all men in their ſins; and ſeldom or never puniſhes any ſinner, ſo ſoon as he deſerves puniſhment. This is a ſenſible argument, which natural reaſon affords, that God is not *extreme to mark, what is done amiſs*; and it gives us pious grounds to hope, that his juſtice, far from proceeding according to ſtrict rigour, is temper'd with all the lenity, and favourable allowances, which infinite mercy, without deſtroying the very nature and our common notions of juſtice, can admit.

What has been ſaid, is ſufficient to give us a general idea of the divine juſtice, both as it reſpects innocent creatures, and creatures capable, by their good or evil actions, of reward or puniſhment. It will be unneceſſary, after this, to deſcend to the more particular caſes, wherein this attribute diſplays itſelf; thoſe will be conſider'd in relation to the juſtice of providence: Neither need we inſiſt any farther upon the reaſons, why juſtice muſt be an attribute belonging to God; the foundation of it in the natural aptitude, order, and relation of things is very evident: I ſhall only add, that, as for theſe conſiderations, we neceſſarily ſuppoſe God always inclin'd to do what is juſt, ſo there is nothing, we can conceive, capable of obſtructing, or oppoſing his inclination.

There are men indeed that in general are very ſenſible of the moral obligations of juſtice, and deſirous of acting conformably to them, who yet in private caſes either cannot ſee the reaſons of them, or if they do, yet are unwilling to be determin'd by thoſe reaſons.

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* *Deut.* 30. 11, 12, 13, 14.

MEN are not always able to diſcover with certainty the true relations of juſt and unjuſt; the want of evidence, the intricacy of the caſe, or the ſpecious appearances of reaſon on both ſides, may render the real merits of it impervious to them. At other times, tho' men plainly enough diſcover, and in a light which fully convinces them, what the rules of juſtice require them to do; yet there are other rules of their conduct, they have preſcrib'd to themſelves, that have a greater power, upon the competition, towards determining their choice, than thoſe, which juſtice preſcribes. But the motives, upon which men are tempted to commit any acts of injuſtice, may principally be reduc'd either to thoſe of prejudice againſt other perſons, or a partial regard to ſome deſigns or intereſts of their own, which they are otherways unable to accompliſh.

WHAT I would obſerve from hence, is, that none of theſe motives to injuſtice being poſſibly incident to God, there cannot for this farther reaſon be ſuppos'd any *unrighteouſneſs in him.* For,

1. THE true and neceſſary relations of things, their agreement and diſagreement, their fitneſs and inequality, are perfectly known to him: And as his judgments *are true and righteous altogether*, ſo his procedure in the execution of them, is exactly correſpondent to his knowledge. *He is excellent in judgment, and in plenty of juſtice*[*].

2. HE cannot be capable of any prejudice towards his creatures. *He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works*[†]. *He is one God, the father of us all*[‡]. *He hath made us, and not we our ſelves, we are his people, and the ſheep of his paſture*[**]. *He loveth all things, that are, and abhors nothing that he has made; for never would he have made any thing, if he had hated it*[††].

3. HE cannot be influenc'd in the exerciſe of his juſtice, by any conſiderations of intereſt, or incapacity of otherways effecting what he deſigns. *Our goodneſs extendeth not to him*[‡‡]. *His is the greatneſs, and the power, and the majeſty, and the glory; all that is in the heaven, and in the earth, is his*[*]. *Doth God then pervert judgment; or doth the almighty pervert juſtice*[†]? In which forcible interrogation is tacitly imply'd the reaſon, why God cannot do any thing that is unjuſt, and reſolv'd into his abſolute and independent power of effecting all things. It is from the ſame natural principle that he argues in another place: *Far be it from*

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[*] *Job* 37. 23.

[†] *Pſalm* 145. 9.

[‡] *Epheſ.* 4. 6.

[**] *Pſalm* 100. 3.

[††] *Wiſd.* 11. 24.

[‡‡] *Pſalm* 16. 2.

[*] 1 *Chron.* 29. 11.

[†] *Job* 8. 3.

the almighty, that he ſhould commit iniquity [*]. For I cite theſe paſſages, not as ſpoken by the Spirit of God, but as ſpeaking agreeably to the nature of things, and the common apprehenſions and reaſon of mankind.

CHAP. XVI.

Of the veracity of God.

IN what I have to ſay concerning this attribute, I ſhall conſider it, not only in relation to ſuch external diſcoveries as God may make of truth, or of his will to mankind, but in the greateſt latitude, the word can be ſuppos'd capable of, as it implies truth in the internal acts or operations of the mind; and to the end we may have more clear and diſtinct notions concerning the veracity of God in this large ſenſe, I ſhall obſerve, according to the following method,

I. THAT it imports a perfect conformity of ideas in the divine mind to ſuch objects, about which it may be conceiv'd to affirm or deny any thing, whether internally, or by ſome external ſignification.

II. THAT it imports more eſpecially a perfect conformity of ſuch propoſitions, as God, if he pleaſes, may ſignify externally, not only to the ideas of his mind, but to the intention of his will.

III. THAT it imports ſincerity in all ſuch exhortations, and fidelity as to all ſuch promiſes, which he may be ſuppos'd to make to his creatures. Tho' we have not examin'd the proofs of divine revelation, yet there being nothing imply'd in it, repugnant to the perfections of God, or the nature of the thing, no juſt objection can lie, againſt our arguing, upon ſuppoſition of it.

I. THERE is a perfect conformity of ideas in the divine mind to ſuch objects, about which it may be conceiv'd to affirm or deny any thing, whether internally, or by ſome external ſignification. In the former reſpect, as truth conſiſts in knowing preciſely the nature of things, with all the relations of equality or perfection between them, *God only is true*; and it may be ſaid ſtrictly, and without a figure, *every man is a lyar* [†]. For there is no man, who perfectly knows the nature of all things, or indeed of any one thing, with all its habitudes and reſpects; and who is not therefore liable to make wrong judgments, or who does not in the progreſs of his thoughts or meditations, on many occaſions, actually make them. For it is not neceſſary that our judgments concerning things, ſhould always be communicated or declar'd, it is ſufficient to denominate them falſe, that we form in our minds any wrong propoſitions concerning the ſubjects, about which they are employ'd. But as this kind of falſhood proceeds from a natural and invincible defect, it will not be charg'd as a moral evil upon us, even tho' we ſhould communicate the erroneous concluſions, which are form'd in our minds, to other perſons. This, however, it is in our power to do; towards avoiding the effects of error, which the love of truth lays a moral obligation upon us, as much as we can, to avoid, we may, in all caſes of doubt or difficulty, ſuſpend our aſſent, till evidence obliges us to give it.

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[*] *Job* 34. 10.

[†] *Rom.* 3. 4.

I do not ſay, but that we may be ſometimes oblig'd to act without evidence, tho' we can never be oblig'd to act contrary to it. A child, a ſervant, or a ſoldier, who ſhould never obey the reſpective commanding authority, but where he perfectly diſcovers the explicit reaſons of the command, or muſt ſtand previouſly to examine them after a curious and ſtrict manner, will neceſſarily fail in the duty and obedience requir'd of him. It is ſufficient under the like circumſtances, that we ſee nothing ſinful in the command impos'd by authority upon us, to juſtify our proceeding immediately to action. Were not this indeed a ſafe rule, no orders could be duly executed, no buſineſs well done, nor any ſociety regularly govern'd. And for this reaſon favourable allowances are, or always ought to be made to dependents acting by command of their ſuperiors; eſpecially when it appears, that was the principal motive upon which they were induc'd to act; and a merciful God, we hope, will judge his creatures by the like rules of equity, when they happen in certain caſes, where they are oblig'd to act, to be in the wrong, without having leiſure, or perhaps capacity, ſtrictly to examine the nature of the action.

But tho', on ſome occaſions, men may be oblig'd to act, they ought never to believe, without evidence. It ſhould be an inviolable rule to us, to preſerve the liberty of our minds, as much as we can, and never to aſſent to any thing, till reaſon will no longer ſuffer us to withold our aſſent. By this means, we may in great meaſure ſecure our ſelves from error in the concluſions we make in our minds, and be, in reſpect to many truths, infallibly aſſur'd of them: Tho' on account of the difficulties, wherewith our ſearch after truth is in general attended, and the pains we muſt take before we can come at that evidence, which leaves no room for doubt, or any farther diſquiſition, our infallibility muſt lie in a narrow compaſs.

But how careful ſoever we may be in preſerving the liberty of our minds, as to the proper operations of them, we cannot always avoid being impos'd upon by others: We rarely fall into promiſcuous converſation, wherein what we call moral evidence, does not in a manner oblige us, to draw falſe concluſions, and make wrong judgments, not only with reſpect to things, but perſons. Every man may conſult himſelf upon the latter head, how eaſy he is in believing any thing to the diſadvantage of thoſe he does not love, againſt whom he has taken up any prejudice, whoſe character he may apprehend, in one regard or other, a diminution to his own, or perhaps as an obſtacle in his way; beſides, that there are perſons who make no conſcience of ſaying a thouſand falſe things of others, merely to ſhew their wit, or from a natural malignity of temper. Here is a large field open'd for ſatyr to expatiate in, but that is not my preſent buſineſs.

What I would farther take notice of, is, that would men really reſolve upon all occaſions to ſpeak the ſenſe of their minds, yet even their language is ordinarily of itſelf very deceitful, and apt to impoſe upon us: How many words are there, which uſe has made current, that give us no determinate idea of what the perſon means, who ſpeaks them, till he be requir'd to explain himſelf; but to ſettle whoſe true ſignification, a more diſtinct apprehenſion, and greater capacity, may ſometimes too be requir'd, than he is maſter of. Hence it is, that very warm diſputes, from which nothing can be concluded, tho' attended with much noiſe and clamour, frequently happen in converſation: As if men, who ſpeak the ſame language, had mutually agreed, in uſing the terms of it, to deceive and to be deceiv'd, to perplex and confound one another.

I have here obſerv'd ſome of the common and unavoidable occaſions of error among men, but am unwilling to think theſe reflections have carry'd me far out of my way, ſince they lead me ſo readily back again into it; and tend to diſcover to us the greater certainty and evidence of thoſe truths, about which the divine mind may be converſant, by removing from it all ſuch defects, as human errors owe their occaſion or original to; which it may not be improper for me to illuſtrate, by a particular induction of what the ſcriptures ſpeak concerning the truth of God, under our preſent acceptation of it. And,

1. God perfectly knows the nature of all things, with all their ſeveral and diſtinct relations, and therefore cannot poſſibly be deceiv'd

ceiv'd in the judgments he makes of them. *He is perfect in knowledge*[*]. *His underſtanding is infinite*[†]. *The Lord is a God of judgment*[‡]. *He is the God of truth*[**]. *He is light, and in him is no darkneſs at all*[††].

2. God perfectly knows the thoughts, and ſecret intentions of men. *He ſearcheth all hearts, and underſtandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts*[‡‡]. *He knoweth the things that come into our mind, every one of them*[*]. *He underſtandeth our thoughts afar off*[†]. He has therefore,

3. No need of words to diſcover our ſecret or real ſentiments. *The darkneſs*, or obſcurity of language, *hideth not from him*; *he can ſee through the thick cloud of it. He hath not eyes of fleſh, neither ſeeth he as man ſeeth*[‡]. *There is not a word in our tongue, but he knoweth it all together*[**].

As God, for theſe reaſons, cannot be deceiv'd in relation to any truth conſider'd as the object of his mind, neither can he err in the method, or in the choice of thoſe terms, whereby he may think fit to ſignify any truth externally, or to make it the ſubject of a divine revelation. The ſeveral relations of things being perfectly known to him, he perfectly knows how to adapt the moſt proper and ſignificant words to expreſs thoſe relations. It is therefore a doctrine flowing from the eternal perfections of the divine nature, that *every word of God is pure*[††]; and every revelation of his will muſt neceſſarily contain *a form of ſound words*[‡‡]; not of *words to no profit*, *the contrivances of philoſophy or vain deceit*; *after the tradition of men, or rudiments of the world*[*]; but *wholſome words*[†], whereby we may know the *certainty* of thoſe things, wherein we are inſtructed.

And ſince God cannot be deceiv'd in his judgment concerning the relations of things, or the manner wherein thoſe relations ought to be expreſs'd or reveal'd, it is plain he cannot for that reaſon, as well as others, which I am going to obſerve, have the leaſt deſign, in any revelation, he may make of his will, of deceiving us. But this leads me to the next particular.

II. That the veracity of God more eſpecially imports a perfect conformity of thoſe truths or propoſitions, which he may, if he pleaſes, ſignify externally, not only to the ideas of his mind, but to the intention of his will.

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[*] *Job* 36. 4.
[†] *Pſalm* 147. 5.
[‡] *Iſaiah* 30. 18.
[**] *Pſalm* 147. 2.
[††] 1 *John* 1. 5.
[‡‡] 1 *Chron.* 28. 9.
[*] *Ezek.* 11. 5.
[†] *Pſalm* 139. 2.
[‡] *Job* 10. 4.
[**] *Pſalm* 139. 4.
[††] *Prov.* 30. 5.
[‡‡] 2 *Tim.* 1. 13.
[*] *Col.* 2. 8.
[†] 1 *Tim.* 6. 3.

And herein indeed conſiſts the proper notion of veracity, when apply'd to men, that what they ſay, is agreeable to their true ſentiments, or really intended at leaſt to expreſs them. And tho' it frequently happens, that we affirm what is falſe, or deny what is true, yet this is not thought a ſufficient ground for charging us with want of veracity, provided we really believe what we ſay, upon ſuch rational means of perſuaſion, as we are capable of coming at. For nothing ought to be imputed to us as criminal, but what either proceeds from a voluntary ignorance, or an ignorance, which, by uſing the proper methods of information, we might have prevented the conſequences of.

But when we knowingly ſpeak what is falſe, and with a direct intention to deceive, then it is, we violate the laws of truth, in the moſt ſhameful and culpable manner. That God can have no ſuch intention in any thing, he may think fit to declare, either as a ſpeculative truth, or rule of life to mankind, will appear from a conſideration of the motives, upon which an intelligent being can only be ſuppos'd capable of falſification, or a lye; and they may in general be reduc'd to incogitancy, or weakneſs, hope of advantage, or a cowardice (that which renders the imputation of a lye ſo very provoking) ariſing from the fear of danger, or ſome impending evil. But theſe are qualities, which need only be mention'd, to ſhew they cannot, nor any other qualities of affinity with them, be incident to the all perfect being; and that the apoſtle therefore in aſſerting, *it is impoſſible for God to lye*, argues from the natural, neceſſary, and eternal reaſon of the thing.

III. The veracity of God imports ſincerity in all ſuch exhortations, and fidelity, as to all ſuch promiſes, which he may be ſuppos'd to make to his creatures.

But the reaſons of our falſifying in what we adviſe others to, or in the expectations we give them, proceeding much from the ſame ignoble motives, upon which men are commonly induc'd to lye, or other motives, which equally argue ſome great imperfection, I ſhall not deſcend to ſhew by a particular enumeration of them, how inconſiſtent it is with the perfections of the divine nature, that God ſhould either reveal truths to men, which he has no intention, they ſhould effectually believe, or preſcribe them a rule of life, which they are not enabled to live up to; or, on the other hand, raiſe in their minds reaſonable expectations of rewards, while they are under a prior and unchangeable decree of being fruſtrated in thoſe expectations.

How ſhall we reconcile ſuch dangerous notions in reference to the conduct of God towards his creatures, with the following paſſages, wherewith I ſhall conclude this head, out of ſacred writ. *All his commandments are true, and his counſels faithfulneſs and truth* *. *The word, that he has ſpoken, the ſame ſhall judge all men at the laſt* †. *He is a faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy* ‡. *His covenant will he not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips* **. *If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful* ††. *He cannot deny himſelf* ‡‡.

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CHAP. XVII.

Of the goodneſs of God.

THO' I have reſerv'd the conſideration of this attribute to the laſt place, yet except perhaps it be that of power, when we caſt our eyes upon this vaſt and admirable ſtructure of things, there is no attribute of God, which occurs ſooner or more naturally to the mind.

Now goodneſs conſiſts in a benevolence of temper, and upon proper occaſions of exerting itſelf, in actually doing good; but ſtill with ſuch a freedom, that the action of it might either have been ſuſpended for a longer time, or even wholly omitted. For if goodneſs ſhould neceſſarily act, or neceſſarily at all times, it would ceaſe, in a moral and proper ſenſe, to be goodneſs. We cannot therefore certainly diſcover, by contemplating the innate goodneſs of God, whether he will produce any thing, without himſelf, or not. A being of infinite perfection, would be infinitely happy, if he ſhould be conceiv'd to ſubſiſt alone. But tho' the creatures do not derive their being from God, by way of neceſſary emanation, but from the free and arbitrary determination of his will; yet, with reſpect to intelligent creatures, capable of happineſs or miſery, and which are, for that reaſon, the only proper objects of goodneſs, when once God has determin'd to create them, we may know in ſome meaſure by conſulting the idea of his goodneſs, with what capacities, and to what ends, he will create them. We may conclude in the firſt place, that he will endow them with ſuch faculties, as are rather perfective of their nature, than which tend to diſhonour and debaſe it, unleſs by occaſion of the ill uſe, they may make of their liberty, and then it is but reaſonable they ſhould *bear their own iniquity*, with all the miſerable effects and conſequences of it. We may certainly conclude farther, that except, for the reaſons before aſſign'd, ſuch beings will be render'd capable of attaining all thoſe external advantages, which may be neceſſary, if not to render them perfectly happy, yet at leaſt to counterpoiſe all the evils, that can poſſibly be incident to them: So that could we form any notion of abſolute power and dominion, upon which God might, with the ſafety of his juſtice, be ſuppos'd to make a decree of rendring his creatures, without any foreſeen fault or demerit in them, eternally miſerable, or even in any degree miſerable, beyond the meaſure of the happineſs they enjoy; yet it would be impoſſible, when we conſider the divine goodneſs, to reconcile the moſt bright and natural ideas we have of it, with ſuch a decree; the doctrine whereof, one would therefore think it had been impoſſible, that any good man ſhould ever have endeavour'd to eſtabliſh.

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* *Iſaiah* 25. 1. † *John* 12. 48. ‡ *Deut*. 7. 9. ** *Pſalm* 89. 34. †† 2 *Tim*. 2. 13. ‡‡ *Heb*. 6. 18.

As God was not determin'd by any neceſſity of his nature, notwithſtanding the innate benignity of it, to create any thing without him, he is equally free in diſtributing or diverſifying the external acts of his goodneſs, after what manner, and in what meaſure he pleaſes. It is ſufficient to vindicate the honour of his ſovereignty and dominion, that *he divides to every man* both the bleſſings of his providence, and the means of his grace, *ſeverally as he will*. Here is a foundation laid for that variety of characters and qualifications, which contribute ſo much to the beauty, order, and advantage of ſociety, whether ſacred or civil; and the diſtinction, which is put upon ſome perſons in both reſpects, does by no means give juſt occaſion to others to complain, that God has dealt injuriouſly, however unequally, with them when they compare their condition with that of other men. As we all enjoy more, than we have a right to enjoy, ſo we all ſuffer leſs, than our iniquities deſerve. God being a debtor to no man, may commit more talents to ſome perſons, and fewer to others: He may with the ſame freedom exerciſe *the power*, which he has, *to help, and to caſt down, to humble, or bring men to honour*. There is nothing in theſe unequal diſtributions, contrary to the idea of goodneſs, and the preſent ſtate of things ſeems in great meaſure to require them. We are all, upon the whole matter, in one degree, and in one kind or other, ſubjects of the divine goodneſs; and no man can have cauſe to complain, where every man is oblig'd, and has reaſon to be thankful. If there are in the courſe of providence ſome events more difficultly reconcileable with theſe maxims, they will be conſider'd in their proper place.

NOTHING is here advanc'd, but what is agreeable to the common ſentiments of mankind, according to which the ſcriptures ſpeak, and are very full and copious on this head. When God took a ſurvey of *every thing, that he had made*, he obſerv'd it to be *very good* [*]. *The Lord is good, and doth good* [†]. *The earth is full of his goodneſs* [‡]. *The eyes of all wait upon him; he opens his hand, and ſatisfyeth the deſire of every living thing* [**]. *But, his delights are with the ſons of men* [††]. And tho' good men are the peculiar objects of his favour and protection, ſo that he *witholds no good thing from them* [‡‡]; *but gives them all things richly to enjoy* [*]. *His eyes running to and fro throughout the whole earth, to ſhew himſelf ſtrong in their behalf* [†]. *Yet he giveth*, without diſtinction, *to all men liberally* [‡]. *He maketh his ſun to riſe on the evil, and on the good, and ſendeth rain on the juſt, and on the unjuſt* [**]. *He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works* [††].

I have hitherto conſider'd the goodneſs of God, chiefly as denoting his beneficence to ſuch of his creatures in general, as are proper objects of it; but I am here led to conſider that primary branch of it, ſtyl'd mercy, as reſpecting mankind in a ſtate of diſobedience againſt God, and conſequently as having juſtly incurr'd his wrath and diſpleaſure. It is true, goodneſs in this reſpect, being a free and arbitrary act of the divine will, we cannot ſo certainly determine whether, or in what manner, God may think fit to exert it, till he has poſitively declar'd his will to this end. A good God, for any thing we know, may be effectually mov'd to compaſſionate the frailties, and pardon the ſins of men; but ſeeing what may be, for that very reaſon, may not be, ſuch conjectures ſtill leave the mind of a ſinner in the greateſt ſuſpence and perplexity, as to a point, which it is of infinite concernment to him, that he ſhould be perfectly ſatisfy'd in.

HOWEVER, from the viſible effects of God's goodneſs in the forbearance of ſinners, and his ſuſpending their puniſhment from time to time, in this world, we are aſſur'd, that juſtice does not always immediately puniſh, and that mercy, in this reſpect at leaſt, does, in fact, continually interpoſe. Some have argued for the natural proofs of the divine compaſſion and mercy towards ſinners, from this farther conſideration, that as a good man is reconcil'd to his child, his friend, or his ſervant, by making allowances to the common errors and eſcapes of human nature, and upon their humble ſubmiſſion or acknowledgment; ſo we may however, entertain ſome faint hopes; that God, who perfectly knows all our frailties and defects, will, upon the like teſtimonies of our repentance, find in himſelf a gracious diſpoſition of being reconcil'd to us. The terms, wherein the ſcriptures ſpeak of the mercy of God, ſeem indeed in ſome meaſure to favour this natural way of reaſoning concerning it. *The Lord, is a God full of compaſſion, and gracious; long-ſuffering, and plenteous in mercy* *. *He is ſlow to anger* †. *He defers his anger, and refrains for the ſinner, that he cut him not off* ‡. *He is good, and ready to forgive* **. *For he knoweth our frame; he remembreth we are duſt* ††.

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[*] *Gen.* 1. 31. [†] *Pſal.* 119. 68. [‡] ——33. 5. [**] ——145. 15, 16.
[††] *Job* 8. 31. [‡‡] *Pſal.* 84. 11. [*] 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. [†] 2 *Chron.* 16. 9.
[‡] *James* 1. 5. [**] *Mat.* 5. 45. [††] *Pſal.* 145. 9.

IF it be ſaid, that theſe acts, which we have obſerv'd, of the divine mercy, both from ſenſible experience and the holy ſcriptures, are only in conſequence of the grace of God, in granting a mediator, the foundation of all his mercies to men; and that there cannot be therefore any grounds to ſinners, who know nothing of ſuch a mediator, to hope for the pardon of their ſins. I anſwer, all I intend to infer, from what has been obſerv'd in both reſpects, is, that we have in general ſome natural grounds to hope, and which ſome of the texts here cited are form'd upon, that God will be merciful to penitent ſinners; tho' as to the method of his ſhewing mercy to them, in a way not derogatory to his majeſty or juſtice, that indeed may principally, if not ſolely depend on his inſtituted, and our knowledge of it, on his reveal'd will.

BUT becauſe goodneſs, is that perfection of God, which we are ſo naturally inclin'd to attribute to him, and concerning which, we are, at the ſame time, too apt to entertain wrong, and ſometimes very dangerous notions; it may not be improper for me to conſider a little more diſtinctly, both the reaſons upon which this attribute is thought to belong, in ſo peculiar a manner, to the divine being, and alſo to remove the grounds of ſome common miſtakes, which conduce in the event to render thoſe perſons, who would extend it too far, the moſt incapable objects of it. And,

1. THAT God is good, appears from the viſible and univerſal effects of his goodneſs: Whatever power or perfection we ſee in the creatures, proceeded originally, and with a direct intention, from him. Inanimate beings, tho' in their own nature not proper objects of goodneſs, yet every where in their relative uſe, bear evident marks and ſignatures of it. But the powers of life and ſenſe, ſtill diſcover more ſurprizing effects of goodneſs, and are in a higher degree ſubſervient both to the beauties and advantages of

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* *Pſal.* 86. 15. † *Lam.* 3. 22. ‡ *Iſaiah* 48. 9. ** *Pſal.* 86. 5.
†† *Pſal.* 103. 14.

human life: So that even upon this narrower view of the creation, the pſalmiſt had reaſon to expreſs himſelf in that pious and paſſionate manner. *O Lord, how manifold are thy works; in wiſdom haſt thou made them all, the earth is full of thy riches* *.

But the nobleſt effect of divine goodneſs, is reaſon or intelligence: For hereby intelligent beings are, in a remoter degree, partakers of the divine nature; they become capable of maintaining ſome kind of entercourſe and ſociety with God, of imitating his perfections, and uniting themſelves to him; for God ſees all truths, and we are able by the uſe of reaſon to diſcover many truths. God always acts according to order, and this order not being altogether unknown to us, it is in our power, on many occaſions, to act conformably to it. God is the ſupreme object of deſire, and in whoſe enjoyment alone our true happineſs conſiſts; and we are capacitated by thoſe admirable faculties he has given us, to draw nearer to him, to love him, and to employ the means he has preſcrib'd in order to our enjoying him, and the things he has prepar'd *for thoſe that love him*, in a future and far happier ſtate. Were it not indeed for the goodneſs of God, it is hard, if not impoſſible to conceive, how we could have any reaſonable motives to love him. Power without goodneſs is attended with an idea of terror; juſtice, of rigour and cruelty; and wiſdom, of artifice and diſſimulation: If a perſon poſſeſs'd of theſe qualities, is ſometimes the object of our love, it is not ſimply on their own account, but becauſe we find them in conjunction with goodneſs. There is no other quality ſeparate from it, capable of giving the heart any kindly or laſting impreſſions. Force, authority, and craft, may create an external reſpect, but a good man will find an advantagious and favourable poſt in the minds of thoſe, he has been beneficial to, and even of thoſe he has not had an opportunity of benefiting, when all the reaſons of fear, intereſt, or dependence, ſhall ceaſe.

Goodness ſeems alſo to be ſtrongly founded in the natural reaſon of the thing, from that ſenſible complacency, the greateſt, perhaps, the mind is capable of, which ariſes in it upon the reflection of our having done ſome good, and truly generous action: And tho', ſtrictly ſpeaking, the perfection of the divine nature does not admit of our attributing any ſuch ſentiments to God; yet by way of accomodation to our underſtanding, he is ſaid to *take pleaſure*, and to *delight* in acts of goodneſs.

The reaſons of our attributing this perfection of goodneſs to God, appear yet farther, if we conſider thoſe defects or paſſions, which ordinarily occaſion the want, or obſtruct the exerciſe of goodneſs in men. The moſt avaritious perſon, where an act of charity does not oppoſe his principles or maxims of ſelf-love, would be willing to offer ſome ſlight ſacrifice to a principle of humanity and good nature: He would, for inſtance, upon his ſeeing an innocent perſon going to ſuffer death, not be averſe to give ſomething, which he could without any ſenſible inconvenience ſpare, to ſave his life. The moſt envious perſon, again, if the occaſion of his envy were wholly remov'd, and all the latent ſeeds of revenge with it, would be inclin'd to do ſome good office, if it coſt him no great pains or trouble, even in favour to one, under circumſtances of diſtreſs, againſt whom he formerly felt the motions of this paſſion; which being one of the moſt common ſprings, that feed a malevolent temper, *Plato*, and * *Hierocles* from him, more particularly reſolve the reaſons of the divine goodneſs, into the impoſſibility of ſuppoſing envy incident to the divine nature.

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* *Pſal.* 104. 24.

BUT in how eminent a manner ſoever we attribute goodneſs to God, we muſt be careful to form no notions of it, but what are conſiſtent with his other infinite perfections, and agreeable to our preſent ſtate, a ſtate of tryal and obedience; which leads me, ſecondly,

2. To obviate ſome miſtakes of dangerous conſequence, whereby men are yet too apt to impoſe upon themſelves concerning this attribute.

THERE are perſons, in the firſt place, who flatter themſelves with the hopes, that they ſhall live and die in the favour of God, tho' they do not live in obedience to his laws, but rather, perhaps, in open contempt and violation of them. The ground of this illuſion is one miſtaken principle or other, which they form to themſelves concerning the divine goodneſs. God, ſay they, is beneficent and gracious; he delights in mercy, puniſhment is his ſtrange work; he willeth not that any ſhould periſh, but would have all men to be ſav'd. Theſe are maxims which we hear every day; and from which the moſt profligate ſinners hope for ſalvation. It muſt be acknowledg'd, however, that they are, in a proper ſenſe, very true, both in regard to the habitual diſpoſition, and actual will of God. He is beneficent; but the acts of beneficence being free, he is not oblig'd to extend them even to innocent creatures beyond their natural ſtate and capacity; much leſs to ſinners, who in conſequence of their own choice, have render'd themſelves at once more unworthy of his favours, and more incapable of receiving them. He is gracious; but his grace is ſuffi-

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* Hieroc. in aurea carm. Pythag.

ciently diſcover'd, in admitting us to terms of pardon, and that too after we have frequently relaps'd, and perhaps run on for many years in a continued circle of ſinning and repenting, of repenting and ſinning. Acts of grace to delinquents are highly conſiſtent with ſuch conditions as require of them a new and reaſonable obedience, tho' under freſh penalties; and the greateſt affront which offenders can be guilty of upon any gracious overtures of pardon made to them, is ſtill to offend, in hopes, that grace may abound. He delights in mercy; but muſt he therefore have no regard to the holineſs and authority of his laws. We can ſcarce ſuppoſe any Prince ſo weak, as to encourage his ſubjects to commit what diſorders they pleaſe, upon an expectation given them, that, out of his great facility of temper, they ſhall be ſuffer'd at laſt to eſcape with impunity: Much leſs can the mercy of God be ſuppos'd to deſtroy the ends of his government, or not to conſiſt with the ſafety and honour of it.

WE grant too, puniſhment is his ſtrange work; but this muſt be underſtood with reſpect to the habitual inclination of his nature, not in oppoſition to thoſe wiſe and juſt reaſons, which may determine him to act in particular caſes by particular wills. We acknowledge farther, it is a concluſion, which ſeems naturally to ariſe from our common notions of the divine goodneſs, that God *willeth not any ſhould periſh, but would have all men to be ſav'd*: Yet we ſay again, theſe words are to be underſtood in relation to his general and antecedent will, not to the ſubſequent conditions of our eſcaping death, and obtaining ſalvation, which his wiſdom and holineſs have preſcrib'd; and I may add too, wherein the characters of his goodneſs do moſt evidently appear. In a word, to ſuppoſe, that either the goodneſs of God in ſaving, or his mercy in pardoning men, will indifferently extend to all men, without any regard to their good, or their evil actions, (and an impenitent ſinner can only find refuge in ſuch a ſuppoſition:) This, I ſay, is to deſtroy the main ſprings of religious obedience at once; and to aſcribe a connivance to a holy, good, with a lenity to a juſt God, and jealous of his honour, equally unworthy of him. *Behold then*, to conclude this article with a pertinent and particular application, *the goodneſs, and the ſeverity of God; to them, which fall, ſeverity; but to thee goodneſs, if thou continue in his goodneſs.*

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SPECU-

SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

BOOK II.
Of divine Revelation, and the holy Scriptures.

PART I.
Of divine Revelation.

CHAP. I.

THO' we are able, by the help of natural reaſon, to prove in a clear and diſtinct manner, the being and attributes of God, which are indeed the ſundamental principles of all religion: Yet there are ſeveral things, which it highly concerns us, upon a religious account, to know, towards the diſcovery whereof, the light of natural reaſon is too obſcure to direct us with ſufficient certainty; and there are ſome things of importance to the ends of religion, with reſpect to which it can afford us no aſſiſtance at all. Having therefore in the former book eſtabliſh'd thoſe two foundamental principles againſt the atheiſts, and in order to confirm the faith of ſuch, who already believe; I ſhall now proceed to attack the deiſts, who deny that God has made, or that it was ever neceſſary for him to make any revelation of his will to mankind. And here again I ſhall purſue ſuch a method, as at the ſame time may tend to expoſe the folly of deiſm, and, by the bleſſing of God, contribute more effectually to convince believers, of the truth, reaſonableneſs, and advantages of that revelation, which he has been pleas'd, out of his great goodneſs, to diſpenſe to them.

I ſhall only firſt premiſe, that I do not here propoſe formally to confute thoſe deiſts, who, with *Epicurus*, acknowledge a God, but deny either that he made the world, or concerns himſelf in the adminiſtration of it: Neither do I mean thoſe deiſts, who, with *Ariſtotle*, believe that the world is eternal, yet under the direction and government of God, but, at the ſame time, ſuppoſe, that his providence extends only to the more conſiderable parts or general affairs of it, without deſcending to take any care or cognizance of particular beings: Neither do I here argue againſt ſuch deiſts, who believe a particular providence, but deny the moral and immutable diſtinction of good and evil, making it wholly to depend on cuſtom or civil inſtitution: No, I here ſuppoſe the unbelievers, againſt whom I am arguing, both right in their notions concerning the being, attributes, and providence of God, and the common principles of natural religion; yet aſſerting, that the light of natural reaſon is of itſelf ſufficient to diſcover by what methods men may acceptably ſerve God, attone for their offences againſt him, and render themſelves eternally happy.

In the proſecution of which deſign, I ſhall gradually advance, and endeavour to make good theſe four propoſitions.

I. That divine revelation is, in the nature of the thing, poſſible.

II. That it was highly expedient.

III. That there are certain characters, both internal and external, whereby perſons, to whom a divine revelation has not been immediately made, may yet be induc'd, upon reaſonable and ſufficient grounds, to believe it.

IV. That in fact a divine revelation has been already made.

Prop. I.

Firſt, that divine revelation is, in the nature of the thing, poſſible.

IF divine revelation ſhould imply any repugnancy to our natural ideas concerning it; this muſt ariſe, either becauſe there would be ſomething in it contrary to the perfections of God, or to the ſtate and condition of men. Upon the former ſuppoſition, either God cannot, or there are very wiſe and good reaſons, why he ſhould not have any entercourſe with mankind, after ſo ſpecial and extraordinary a manner. To ſay, he cannot reveal himſelf to mankind, argues, what there is no imaginable foundation to ſuppoſe, a defect of his power; and in a caſe too, which is ſo far from implying any natural impoſſibility or contradiction that we have very ſtrong and reaſonable grounds to believe it practicable. What ſhould hinder him, who made a human ſoul, from making what impreſſions he pleaſes upon it. We find our ſelves capable of communicating our thoughts one to another, either by means of a ſound of words, which ſtrikes the ear, or by writing, and other ſignatures of what we intend, which affect the eye: Yet theſe are only occaſional cauſes, that appear nevertheleſs to be a great way about, of our converſing together, and which the wit of man could never diſcover to have any natural or immediate connexion with the effect. Why then cannot God make uſe of the like means to impreſs what ideas he thinks fit on our minds, or to give ſuch motions to the brain, as may occaſionally excite whatever thoughts he would produce in us? Or rather indeed, why may he not, without any intermediate or occaſional cauſe at all, enlighten the mind by a direct and naked view of ſuch truths, which it did not know before, and which otherways it could never, by its own induſtry and application, have come to the knowledge of? This method indeed of God's revealing himſelf to men by immediate inſpiration, was more extraordinary among the prophets, than that of divine dreams and viſions, which were made by impreſſions on the phantaſy, and other more ſenſible ways * of conveying divine truths to the mind, by means of ſome external appearance. But whatever method God was pleas'd to employ to this end, the operation was ſo ſtrong, lively, and penetrating, as plainly diſtinguiſh'd him to be the author of it: And indeed, if it be allow'd that God can reveal any thing to man, we muſt grant he can do it in ſuch a manner, that the perſon to whom the revelation is made, may certainly know it to be a divine revelation; otherways the very end and deſign, upon which God was induc'd to make it, would be entirely fruſtrated; and no one could ever be able to diſtinguiſh between the divine action and the illuſions of evil ſpirits. But how then could we reconcile it with the wiſdom of God, that he ſhould make uſe of certain means to no end; or with his power, that he ſhould not be capable of effecting his end. Beſides that it would reflect on his veracity, to reveal any thing to us in ſuch a manner, that we could not be infallibly aſſur'd whether the revelation came from himſelf, or from ſome other being; or whether, perhaps, it might be nothing, after all, but the effect of a very ſtrong and lively imagination. Were we under an incapacity of making a diſtinction, where it is ſo neceſſary, into what errors and viſions of enthuſiaſm, would it be the occaſion of betraying us?

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* *Lightfoot* reckons ſix ways, whereby God reveal'd his will to men. 1. By dreams. 2. By apparitions, when they were awake. 3. By viſions, when they were aſleep. 4. By a voice from heaven. 5. By inſpiration, which he calls revealing of the ear; and 6. By rapture or extaſy, the excellenteſt of all, and which he underſtands concerning the dead ſleep, which fell upon *Adam*. *Vol.* 1. *p.* 844.

If God then do not make any revelation to men, and what they may diſtinctly know to be ſo, it is not from want of power to that end, but becauſe there are very wiſe and good reaſons why he ſhould not make any. But how do thoſe reaſons appear, or upon what grounds can they be ſaid to ariſe? The relative goodneſs of God, conſiſts in his deſigning the good and happineſs of his creatures; and his wiſdom, in taking the beſt and moſt effectual meaſures towards executing his deſign. Now when we come to conſider the expediency of divine revelation, we ſhall diſcover it to be ſo far from being inconſiſtent with theſe attributes, or in any reſpect derogatory to them, that nothing could have tended to give us more bright or powerful ideas of them.

Neither does a divine revelation import any repugnancy in the nature of it, to the ſtate and condition of men: If it do, there muſt either be no occaſion for it, in order to ſupply the defects of human reaſon, or elſe men muſt be ſuppos'd under ſome natural incapacity of receiving it. How far ſuch a revelation may be requiſite towards inſtructing men more clearly both in the principles and duties of religion, will be conſider'd in the ſequel: And this latter ſuppoſition has been already obviated by what was ſaid concerning the power of God to impreſs what ideas he thinks fit on intelligent minds, and to make the perception of thoſe ideas ſo ſtrong and evident, that there can be no doubt, whether the revelation really comes from him; but the perſon to whom it is made, may, however tempted to diſtruſt himſelf, and to queſtion, *how can theſe things be*, yet as certainly know it to be a divine revelation, as he knows any propoſition; or any fact whatever to be true, of whoſe truth he has the greateſt aſſurance. But why, ſince I am led to repeat this argument, as finite ſpirits can act upon one another by a reciprocal communication of their thoughts, ſhould he who gave the faculty of perception, *the God of the ſpirits of all fleſh*, be incapable of making us perceive, in what manner, and with what degree of evidence he thinks fit.

YET an * author of diſtinction in the world has advanc'd ſomething inconſiſtent, as I take it, with what is here ſaid, as to the method of our judging concerning the truth of any divine revelation immediately made to us. He ſuppoſes, there are ſeveral truths, which may be preſented to the minds of men in a very ſtrong light, and which they believe, as enthuſiaſts ordinarily do, to be divinely reveal'd, when nevertheleſs they come to the knowledge of them, tho' unknown to them before, by ſome other way. A propoſition, he argues, may come into one's mind by way of connecting certain ideas, which he has meditated on before, or by occaſion of what he has lately read, or heard others diſcourſe of; or there may be other inviſible beings, which may excite certain ideas in him towards forming ſuch a propoſition. This is no proof that it comes from God, except he knows that God reveals it, he does not ſee, but only believe, that it is divinely reveal'd. To know with certainty, whether the revelation be really from God, it is not a ſtrong perſuaſion of its being ſo, nor the evidence of the truths themſelves reveal'd; but it is requiſite that God ſhould convince us by ſome undeniable tokens, which we cannot be miſtaken in, that it is he who enlightens us. He alledges, that the ſeveral ſigns which were requir'd by the prophets ſhew this; and obſerves, that tho' *Moſes* ſaw the buſh burn without being conſum'd, and heard a voice out of it, and that this was ſomething beſides finding an impulſe upon his mind to go to *Pharaoh*; yet he thought not this enough to authorize him to go, till God by another miracle of his rod turn'd into a ſerpent, had aſſur'd him of a power to teſtify his miſſion by the ſame miracle to be repeated before them, whom he was ſent to. As *Gideon* alſo was ſent by an angel to deliver *Midian*, yet deſir'd a ſign to convince him, that this commiſſion was from God.

BUT how does it follow, that becauſe the prophets ſometimes requir'd a ſign, that therefore a ſign was always neceſſary to confirm to themſelves the divine authority of the revelation, wherewith they were charg'd. It is certain, the word of the Lord often came unto them, nay, that they ordinarily propheſy'd in his name, without any particular or extraordinary token to atteſt either their doctrine or their predictions. And indeed where a ſign was requir'd, it does not appear ſo generally to have been intended for the ſatisfaction of the prophets, and in order to convince them that they were really inſpir'd by God, as to ſatisfy thoſe concerning the truth of their inſpiration, to whom they were ſent. If in ſome particular caſes a ſign was given at the inſtance of a prophet himſelf, this was not to convince him, that he had been divinely inſpir'd; but that, where he apprehended himſelf altogether unequal to his commiſſion, God would certainly be with him in the execution of it. As in the caſe of *Moſes*, even after he had ſeen the flame of fire in the buſh, he was ſo diffident of his own abilities to undertake, what God had commanded him, that he remonſtrates, and ſays unto God, *Who am I, that I ſhould go unto Pharaoh; and that I ſhould bring forth the children of Iſrael out of Ægypt*[*]? And in another place he repreſents himſelf defective, as to a perſuaſive and ready manner of expreſſion. *O, my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor ſince thou haſt ſpoken unto thy ſervant, but I am ſlow of ſpeech, and of a ſlow tongue. Gideon* in like manner expreſſes his diffidence of what the angel ſaid to him, on the account of his mean extraction, and his low circumſtances of life. *O, my Lord,* replies he to the angel, *wherewith ſhall I ſave Iſrael? Behold, my family is poor in Manaſſeh, and I am the leaſt in my father's houſe*[*]. Now there is a material difference between a prophet's believing that a revelation is made to him by God, and his believing that God will effectually ſupport him by a ſupernatural power in the diſcharge of his commiſſion, founded on that revelation. He may be aſſur'd, by an extraordinary impulſe of the Spirit of God upon his mind, that he has a divine commiſſion; and yet God, for the greater tryal of his faith, may not think fit at the ſame time, or after the ſame method, to aſſure him, that he ſhall be enabled to overcome with eaſe all the difficulties, to which he apprehends it may expoſe him. After all, neither of theſe inſtances are proper on the occaſion, upon which this author produces them. For what diſpute ſoever there may be concerning the evidence of immediate inſpiration, which is what the enthuſiaſts againſt whom he writes, only pretend to; yet there can be no diſpute, whether God, when he manifeſts himſelf by the viſible appearance and miniſtry of an angel, as he did both to *Moſes* and *Gideon*, can without any other ſign, certainly, and beyond all poſſibility of doubt, evidence to thoſe to whom he makes a revelation, that it is in truth a divine revelation.

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* Mr. *Lock* in his chapter of enthuſiaſm.

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[*] *Gen.* 3. 11.

[†] *Judges* 6. 15.

I had not enlarg'd ſo much in confutation of an error, which I had only conſider'd under the common notion of a ſpeculative error: But where the divine inſpiration of the far greater part of the holy ſcriptures is the point in queſtion, we cannot be too copious in diſcuſſing it: And yet if the notion, againſt which I have been arguing, be true, it is but a ſmall portion of the ſcriptures which the prophets in the Old Teſtament, or the apoſtles in the New, could be infallibly aſſur'd, was divinely reveal'd to them; it not appearing, that every time the word of the Lord came to them, or that they ſpake in his name, a miraculous teſtimony was produc'd: On the other hand, they ordinarily preach'd and propheſy'd, without having the divine authority of their doctrine or miſſion confirm'd by ſpecial miracles; neither was it neceſſary, during the courſe of their miniſtry, as I ſhall ſhew hereafter, that there ſhould have been a continued ſucceſſion of miracles towards the confirmation of it.

We grant, there are other intelligent beings, beſides God, that may be capable of acting on human minds, by means of whoſe ſuggeſtions, men, eſpecially of a temper inclin'd to enthuſiaſm, have been often ſeduc'd to *believe a lye*, or imagin'd, that God had ſpoken to them, when he had not ſpoken; this only ſhews, that there are perſons of a weak underſtanding, tho' of a ſtrong imagination, and even perhaps of an honeſt intention, capable of being impos'd upon. But does it follow from hence, that God cannot enable us to diſtinguiſh his impreſſions on our minds, from thoſe of other ſpirits, and in as clear and evident a manner too, as we ordinarily diſtinguiſh between the thoughts communicated to us by different perſons? And if God may do this, the poſſibility whereof has been already evinc'd, then tho' it is not neceſſary for us to know the method of his doing it, yet in caſe of his making any revelation, it is neceſſary to the end for which it is made, that he ſhould do it: For unleſs a perſon can be certain, when any thing is reveal'd to him by God, that God reveals it; how can the revelation made to him be, what God intends it, either a certain ground of his own faith, or of the faith of thoſe to whom he may be commiſſion'd to divulge it?

There is yet one argument of the deiſts againſt the poſſibility of divine revelation, that appears indeed the moſt ſpecious of all the arguments which they have been able to produce againſt reveal'd religion in general; and which I ſhall therefore in the concluſion of this chapter, conſider, as briefly as I can, the force of. This argument then is taken from the idea, which the deiſts pretend men naturally entertain concerning infinite wiſdom. It is, ſay they, below the character of a being infinitely wiſe, to act in the government of a world, which he has made, by immediate and particular wills. The more ſimple and general thoſe laws are, by which any being forms and purſues his deſigns, the more admirable and conſpicuous is the wiſdom of his conduct. The all-wiſe God therefore having deſign'd to create the world, and perfectly knowing the power and progreſs of all natural cauſes, ought to have eſtabliſh'd ſuch a ſcheme of things, that he ſhould never have occaſion afterwards to alter it, or to interpoſe by any ſpecial direction, towards the better regulation of his work, as men are forc'd to do in order to rectify or repair the works of art. They ſuppoſe it much more agreeable to the character of an agent, who in one view perfectly comprehends all poſſible methods of effecting his deſign in a manner moſt worthy of him, that all things ſhould for ever move and act in a ſtated and uniform manner, by virtue of certain general laws of motion or action originally impreſs'd on them.

Now as to the material world, ſuppoſing God had only deſign'd it as an eſſay of his wiſdom or power, and without any regard to the ſtate of free and moral agents, who were to be the inhabitants of it, this way of reaſoning would have had a very probable foundation: Seeing the more comprehenſive or leſs complicated the deſign of any agent is, the greater idea we muſt neceſſarily have of his underſtanding. God then having once put matter in motion, and diſpos'd the ſeveral parts of it, without relation to any other beings, in the order we now behold them, it is not unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, that thoſe parts would for ever have continued to perform their reſpective offices, without the interpoſition of God at every exigence, or on any, to accelerate or retard the motions, to fortify or ſuſpend the influences of them.

But the caſe of moral agents is very different: For tho' God has preſcrib'd a general law for their conduct, yet as they are capable of making an ill uſe of their liberty, and committing certain diſorders, prejudicial both to themſelves and the common good of ſociety, it is very worthy of the wiſdom of God to interpoſe, by ſpecial acts of his providence or grace, towards remedying thoſe diſorders. And as ſin does not only in general occaſion ignorance and blindneſs of mind, but puts men under a natural incapacity of knowing ſome things of great importance to their happineſs to be known, the goodneſs of God, which is always conſiſtent with his wiſdom, appears no leſs in making ſuch diſcoveries of his will to mankind, towards promoting their happineſs, which, as to ſome articles, they could never have come in an ordinary way, to any certain knowledge of, and in moſt reſpects could but have known very imperfectly at the beſt.

We grant, uniformity is very deſirable in the conduct of any work, where the nature and deſign of it will admit: yet certainly he would not much merit the reputation of wiſdom, who for the ſake of acting in a ſimple and uniform manner, ſhould fail of the end moſt worthy of his action, and even for which he was principally induc'd to act.

And for this reaſon, ſince the material world was deſign'd by God to be inhabited by free agents, it was impoſſible, in the nature of the thing, that any general and uniform laws of motion could have been ſo fix'd, that there would not on many occaſions have happen'd a neceſſity of departing from them: For man by a good or ill uſe of his liberty, is capable of reward or puniſhment, and it is requiſite in many reſpects to the ends of providence in this life, that he ſhould be here rewarded or puniſh'd, and that by occaſion of ſenſible evils or enjoyments; but it is impoſſible to conceive how any fix'd and immutable ſcheme of motion can be ſo contriv'd or adapted to the ſtate of free and mutable agents, as to become on every particular occaſion, the proper inſtrument of rewards or puniſhments to them.

We may add, that man, by the freedom of his will, has a power, in many caſes, even over the parts of this material ſyſtem, ſo far as to ſtop or retard, or to vary the direction of their motion; with the exerciſe of which power, a ſimple and uniform ſcheme of motion is equally irreconcileable. It is certain, that the courſe of the firſt motion of things, is in ſeveral reſpects very much alter'd by means of human induſtry and art. The earth by the building of cities, and cutting of rivers; by agriculture, and the opening of mines and minerals, is very different, as to the ſtate of its exterior parts, from what it would otherways have been. Theſe alterations in the ſurface of the earth, cauſe in many places, to mention no other effects of them, a very different temperature of the air; on which a good or ill ſtate of health, with regard to a vaſt number of people viſibly depends. Theſe conſiderations ſhew, that if a divine providence govern the world, which we here ſuppoſe, it is ſo far from being inconſiſtent with the wiſdom of God, to act in the government of it by immediate and particular wills, that his action, in this reſpect, is now become neceſſary to regulate the courſe of nature, to keep it in a right channel, and to prevent thoſe ill, or direct thoſe good effects of human choice and labour, which occaſion ſuch frequent and conſiderable changes in material beings: And if the all-wiſe God, notwithſtanding the ſimplicity of thoſe laws of motion, which he has impreſs'd on corporeal beings, may yet by a ſpecial act of his will, direct or alter the courſe of their motion, why ſhould it be thought derogatory to his wiſdom to attribute to him, in particular caſes, a power of informing, by ſome extraordinary method, the minds of ſpiritual beings; eſpecially towards accompliſhing ſo many wiſe and excellent ends of his government, as I am proceeding in the next place to conſider.

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Chap. II. Prop. II.

That a divine revelation was highly expedient.

TO thoſe, who believe the power of God, I have ſaid enough concerning the poſſibility of his revealing any truth or doctrine to mankind; but it does not therefore follow, that men could reaſonably hope for a divine revelation, or that there were any good and ſufficient motives, which might induce God to make it. That we may come to a reſolution in this point, it may be proper to enquire, how far man, in his natural ſtate, really wanted a divine revelation, with reſpect to the following particulars.

I. A more perfect knowledge of his duty.

II. The motives, which might moſt effectually engage him to diſcharge it: And,

III. The means of reconciling himſelf to God, upon his failure in it.

If it appear, upon enquiry, that on all theſe accounts a divine revelation was really wanting to mankind, the goodneſs of God in making it, and the expediency of it with reſpect to thoſe it was made to, will be equally evident, and from the ſame conſiderations: And,

I. Man in his natural ſtate wanted a more perfect knowledge of his duty. I ſhall not here take upon me to enumerate all the particular caſes, wherein the blindneſs of man, as to his duty, under the ſeveral relations of it, wanted to be cur'd. I ſhall only obſerve the defects of human and unaſſiſted reaſon, with reſpect to ſome few inſtances, wherein it notoriouſly fail'd in deducing the precepts of natural religion.

Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve, is one of thoſe precepts, which the light of nature ſeems to dictate with the cleareſt evidence. Yet how groſſly have mankind in general err'd, and do ſtill err, where no divine revelation has been made to them, both concerning the object, and manner of divine worſhip.

It has been pretended, indeed, that many of the heathens believ'd the unity of the divine nature, and that they worſhip'd thoſe deities, which were by nature no Gods, only as beings ſubordinate to the ſupreme God; but ſtill while they paid divine honours, the very ſame which they paid to the ſupreme God, to thoſe ſubordinate beings, the charge of idolatry muſt neceſſarily lie, as much, for that reaſon, againſt them, as if they had really believ'd a plurality of co-ordinate and independent Gods: For they not only invocated thoſe falſe deities, but they erected temples, wherein they paid their publick devotions; and altars, upon which they ſacrific'd to them: What could they have done more, if ſacrifice had been a duty of natural religion, in honour of the true God?

Their ignorance concerning the object of divine worſhip, appear'd farther from their repreſenting their falſe deities by ſenſible images, and thoſe too of the moſt contemptible creatures, to which notwithſtanding their worſhip was directly, and in the moſt ſolemn manner addreſs'd. The apoſtle obſerv'd concerning their idolatry in this reſpect, that *they changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to fourfooted beaſts, and creeping things* *. Many of their images, we grant, were only ſymbolical; but that there were others, which were really conceiv'd to reſemble the deities, in whoſe honour they were made, is too evident to be deny'd, had we not the authority of the ſame apoſtle to aſſure us of the fact, where he charges them with thinking, *that the Godhead is like unto gold, or ſilver, or ſtone graven by art, or man's device* †.

If it be ſaid, that the worſhip of the heathens did not terminate in thoſe images, but in the deities repreſented by them; and could this be allow'd to excuſe them from the charge of idolatry, as to the end of their worſhip, which evidently it does not, ſeeing they paid all the viſible honour and adoration to the image, which they could have done to any deity, it was made to repreſent, if capable of a viſible appearance; yet the charge of idolatry, with reſpect to the object of their worſhip, as it imported polytheiſm, muſt ſtill lie unanſwerably againſt them: Except what ſome learned men have conjectur'd, ſhould prove true, that the heathens acknowledg'd but one ſupreme deity, and the other deities, as they call'd them, were only different powers or qualities, whereby he was worſhip'd under ſo many different names; as a man continues the ſame individual perſon, in what variety ſoever he may appear of his dreſs, or diſpoſition. A paſſage of [*] *Seneca* ſeems to be very applicable on this occaſion: You may, ſays he, appropriate what names you pleaſe to *Jupiter*, ſo long as they import any power or effect of celeſtial cauſes; and you may therefore diſtinguiſh him by ſo many appellations, as you attribute to him diſtinct powers. *Lactantius*, tho' he is ſometimes very ſevere upon *Ariſtotle*, and repreſents him as a contemner of God and religion [†], yet he acknowledges on another occaſion, that this philoſopher believ'd, there was but one God in nature, and many popular gods, or gods only in name [‡]. Thoſe, who will conſult the celebrated author refer'd to in the margin [**], will find a pretty large collection of paſſages to this purpoſe. But whatever notion the philoſophers, who enquir'd more ſtrictly into the nature of things, might have concerning the unity of God, the vulgar do not appear to have believ'd the ſeveral deities they worſhip'd, only as ſo many diſtinct qualities, but as beings having a perſonal and diſtinct ſubſiſtence: The perſonal actions attributed to them; their publick aſſemblies and debates; their compotations and quarrels, to ſay nothing of their conjugal relations, cannot be intelligibly accounted for upon any figurative ſchemes of ſpeech; and tho' *Plutarch*, whoſe reaſon will hold with reſpect to the heathen deities in general, is forc'd to acknowledge in his treatiſe of *Iſis* and *Oſiris* [††], that it is impious and abſurd to ſuppoſe thoſe things which are reported concerning them, to be literally true; yet it ſeems equally difficult, on the other hand, to explain them allegorically, in a ſenſe agreeable to the dignity and perfections of the divine nature. If thoſe learned men who have endeavour'd to allegorize *Homer* after a manner intended to ſhew, that his theology may be reconcil'd with the fundamental articles of natural religion, have been ſo much embarraſs'd and foil'd in the attempt, how was it poſſible for the vulgar, who invocated and ſacrific'd to ſo many diſtinct deities, and as perſonally diſtinguiſh'd, to make a right judgment concerning the ſpirit and myſtical deſign, which can ſcarce be render'd intelligible to any one, againſt the plain, obvious, and literal meaning of their worſhip [‡‡].

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* *Rom.* 1. 23. † *Acts* 17. 29.

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[*] De benef. lib. 4. cap. 7.

[†] De irâ Dei. cap. 19.

[‡] De falſâ relig. lib. 5.

[**] Huet. demonſtr. evang. p. 115.

[††] P. 358.

[‡‡] It is well obſerv'd by the excellent author of, *The reaſonableneſs and certainty of the chriſtian religion*, from *Dionyſius Halicarnaſſus*, that the myſtical expoſitions concerning the pagan theology, were known to very few; but that the people underſtood the fables of it in the groſſeſt ſenſe, and either deſpis'd all religion, or encourag'd themſelves in wickedneſs by the example of their gods. *Vol.* 1. *p.* 336. *Edit.* 3.

MANKIND, where no revelation was made to them, farther wanted a more perfect knowledge, with reſpect to the manner of divine worſhip. I have occaſionally mention'd the uſe of ſacrifice before, which yet probably had its origin among the heathen, rather from a very ancient tradition, that God would be reconcil'd to ſinners by a ſacrifice of his own appointment, than from any natural propriety in the thing itſelf abſolutely conſider'd, to attone for the ſins of men againſt him: Or ſince a great part of the jewiſh worſhip was aped by the nations round about that people, the cuſtom of ſacrificing might probably be deriv'd to them as other religious rites were, by their converſing with the *Jews*, or their having an opportunity of conſulting even the writings of *Moſes* himſelf.

BUT whatever the origin was of ſacrifice among the heathen, as it was not founded on any divine or poſitive law, I ſpeak here concerning propitiatory ſacrifice, the practice of it was certainly unlawful, eſpecially as they ſuppos'd the blood of bulls and goats might contribute to take away ſin by ſome natural efficiency, without any reſpect to that ſacrifice, or ſo much as their having any notion of it, in virtue of which, the very ſacrifices, which were by a ſpecial divine authority appointed under the *Moſaick* diſpenſation, had all their force and efficacy.

BUT the manner of the pagan worſhip was alſo impious, as it contributed to introduce a univerſal corruption of manners. It may be ſaid indeed, that nothing tended ſo much to promote vice and immorality among the heathens, as the very practice of piety, according to the notions they had concerning it. Men will be very apt to think it reaſonable, that they ſhould imitate the deities they adore, and obſerve ſuch rites of worſhipping them, as are moſt agreeable to their attributes. Upon ſo natural a ſuppoſition, it was impoſſible but that the heathen world muſt have been extremely corrupt: For there was ſcarce any vice, which they could not pretend the example of one deity or other to patronize: Impurity, not to mention other diſorders in their worſhip, was made, on many occaſions, a principal part of their devotion. It is a ſhame even to mention ſome of thoſe religious acts, if we may ſpeak according to their corrupt ſenſe, which were done of them in ſecret. When *covetouſneſs* is term'd * *idolatry* by the apoſtle, he does not mean the vice commonly ſo accounted; which conſiſts in loving the world, and deſiring the external advantages of it to an immoderate degree, tho' in that reſpect a covetous perſon may not improperly be term'd an idolater; but he alludes to thoſe vile and corrupt rites, wherewith the worſhip of certain heathen deities was perform'd, in a manner ſuitable to the vicious qualities ſeverally attributed to them.

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* Dr. Ham. in loc.

Where their worſhip was not in the nature of it directly ſinful or impure, yet it was of no uſe towards promoting the great ends of piety, as they chiefly made religion, with the great merit of it, to conſiſt in external pomp and ceremony. We find indeed ſome occaſional paſſages in the heathen writers, concerning inward purity of heart, as the moſt acceptable ſacrifice men could offer to God; tho' it is obſervable to the advantage of the chriſtian revelation, that ſentiments of this kind occur much more frequently in the writings of thoſe moraliſts, who wrote after criſtianity was publickly profeſs'd, and taught in the world. For if theſe ſentiments had been owing to the light of natural reaſon, and not of that revelation, which the authors of them disbeliev'd, and ſome of them violently oppos'd, what account can be given that they did not diſcover themſelves with equal force and evidence before, as after the time the goſpel of Chriſt was promulg'd?

But whatever the more knowing or learned among the heathen might think, yet in reference to the publick worſhip, to which, for ſeveral reaſons of conſequence, they outwardly conform'd, they kept their notions privately to themſelves, as being too dangerous to be truſted to the vulgar; and eſpecially to the civil magiſtrate, who was the guardian of their religion; or to the prieſts, who had a more immediate intereſt, in ſupporting the exterior of it, and the credit of their own profeſſion. As the chriſtian prieſthood is eſtabliſh'd by a divine authority, and upon ſo clear and inconteſtable grounds, we need not be afraid that the dignity of this order ſhould ſuffer, by our expoſing the corruptions of the heathen prieſthood; tho' we are ſenſible how frequently they have been mention'd, to favour the oblique and inſidious reflections of prophane men, againſt the miniſters of Chriſt in general.

Man, in his natural ſtate, wanted a more perfect knowledge of his duty, as well in reference to morals, as piety. I have already obſerv'd under the head of impurity, one cauſe of corruption, which could not fail of contributing very much to the growth of it; and we may obſerve that few of the philoſophers have touch'd upon this article, except with a tenderneſs, which ſhews, that it did not give them much diſtaſte or offence. *Cicero*, who has ſaid ſo many excellent things on the ſubject of morality, was not aſham'd to plead openly before a court of judicature, in favour and defence of this vice. * He argues, that we cannot always expect to be govern'd by reaſon; the paſſions will ſometimes, in their turn, get the aſcendant over us. He proceeds to obſerve afterwards, that if there be any one, who thinks young perſons ought to be prohibited the uſe of venereal pleaſures, he is very rigid in his opinion, and not only condemns the common liberties of that age, but what was alſo commonly practis'd and indulg'd by the ages preceding *. If theſe are the words of the orator, and were ſpoken only by him as a colourable plea in behalf of his client, they prove too ſtrongly the corrupt diſpoſition of his heart; for they plainly ſhew, he had more concern for his own honour under that character, than the real advancement of virtue, or indeed for the publick honour of his country, whereof he always affected to appear ſo ſtrenuous an aſſertor: But if they are the words of the philoſopher, which it is more for the advantage of *Cicero* that we ſhould ſuppoſe, then they may ſerve to diſcover to us, what falls more properly under our preſent conſideration, the blindneſs of human underſtanding, with reſpect to certain moral duties, in perſons of the greateſt natural and acquir'd endowments.

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* *Non ſemper ſuperet vera illa & directa ratio, vincat aliquando cupiditas, voluptáſque rationem.* Pro. M. Cœlio.

I might deſcend to ſhew in particular, that humility, and ſelf-denial, patience under provocations, and forgiveneſs of injuries, were in a manner unknown duties to the pagan world. It is ſufficient to obſerve, that their notions concerning moral duties in general, were much leſs perfect, than they appear to be among the moſt ignorant of thoſe, who enjoy the benefits of reveal'd religion. But it would be endleſs to cite teſtimonies upon the ſeveral heads of morality, in order to ſhew how much a ſupernatural light was neceſſary towards rectifying the miſtakes, and improving the knowledge of men concerning it. The deiſts themſelves muſt acknowledge, that natural religion, whether conſider'd with reſpect to faith or manners, was never taught in that full extent, no not by thoſe who addicted themſelves to the ſtudy of philoſophy, and moſt improv'd their knowledge thereby, wherein it is now ordinarily underſtood by illiterate chriſtians.

But admitting, that any of the philoſophers had been capable of publiſhing a juſt and complete ſyſtem of natural religion, or that ſuch a ſyſtem could have been collected out of all their writings, there are ſtill two things which would have render'd it leſs uſeful and inſtructive to the generality of mankind. For,

In the firſt place, all the principles they laid down, ought to have been eſtabliſh'd upon clear and undeniable grounds. Why ſhould any one in what relates to the common and moſt conſiderable intereſts of mankind, be believ'd implicitly, and on his own authority. The deiſts who deny there is any divine revelation, and think the light of nature, when carefully attended to, ſufficient towards inſtructing men in all the duties of morality; yet will not do human reaſon ſo much diſhonour as to oblige them blindly to acquieſce in what does not, upon examination, evidently appear to be reaſonable: What authority, for inſtance, had *Plato* or *Tully* to preſcribe a rule of life to the reſt of mankind? They were fallible men, and might probably be deceiv'd themſelves, as in fact they were; they were not exempt from the common infirmities of human nature, and ſo might poſſibly, upon ſome ſiniſter views, even employ their eloquence with deſign to deceive others. There are too violent ſuſpicions of their corruption in this reſpect, from the external compliance they ſhew'd, with the eſtabliſh'd forms of religion; and, not to examine too nicely, whether, on certain occaſions, as the *Roman* orator has in the forecited inſtance too viſibly done, they have not openly made conceſſions that favour'd the common vices of thoſe times wherein they liv'd; and it will always be ſuppos'd, that men, who have been known to prevaricate in one caſe, are capable at leaſt, upon the ſame motives, whenever they recur, of prevaricating in another: So that whether we conſider an author, who would publiſh an entire body, or collection of moral laws, for the conduct of human life, as ſubject either to error, or to corruption, it is neceſſary that he ſhould make out every propoſition, he advances, by a juſt chain of proofs, and thoſe too deduc'd in ſo clear, full, and convincing a manner, that the mind may be irreſiſtibly compell'd to yield its aſſent to them. But if morality, in all the branches of it, were to be eſtabliſh'd by ſuch a deduction of conſequences, and ſo, as to be accommodated to the capacity of all men; yet how few men would be willing to undergo that labour of mind in conſulting ſuch a vaſt work, which might be neceſſary to their own ſatisfaction in particular? It might then be ſaid almoſt without a figure, that *the world itſelf could not contain the books, that ſhould be written.*

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* *Abhorret non modò ab hujus ſeculi licentiâ, verùm etiam à majorum conſuetudine & conceſſis.*

But if, in the next place, all perſons had ſtrength of mind, to examine and go through ſuch a work, with that attention, which is requiſite; yet conſidering the neceſſary affairs, the reaſonable avocations, and, I may add, the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of the preſent life, how ſmall, in compariſon, would be the number of thoſe, who could find leiſure or time, for ſo very long and laborious an enquiry?

BOTH theſe conſiderations tend to ſhew, how expedient it was that God ſhould commiſſion ſome perſon to inſtruct mankind in the duties of religion, and the reaſon holds equally ſtrong as to the doctrines of it, who ſhould not be oblig'd to make formal and particular proof of every thing he might propoſe as a rule of practice, but who ſhould teach, *as one having authority*. A reveal'd truth, when plainly declar'd, admits of no diſpute. The revelation of God muſt, in honour of his veracity, be always thought conformable to the reaſon of God; and does therefore prevent all human reaſoning upon the certainty of what it preſcribes. Nothing can be more juſt than a paſſage cited by *Tully* from *Plato* on this occaſion. “We cannot deny our aſſent to any thing, that has the ſanction of a divine authority, tho' it be not confirm'd to us by the ſtrict methods of human argumentation or diſcourſe [*].

THO' we grant then, many of the precepts, which natural religion teaches, diſcover themſelves with an evidence, that cannot eaſily be reſiſted; yet all moral duties do not appear to us in a light equally ſtrong and convincing; and for this reaſon, tho' the grounds of every moral virtue are every where the ſame, yet morality, in certain inſtances, is often obſerv'd to vary, as to times and places. There are perhaps at preſent few nations in the world, where cuſtom, or ſome common intereſt, has not tended in one particular caſe or other, to confound the diſtinction of good and evil, at leaſt in ſome meaſure to take off that ſhame and infamy, wherewith the commiſſion of certain vices would have been otherways attended. If reflections of this kind afford us juſt matter of regret in a chriſtian world, wherein a *form of ſound doctrine* has been deliver'd to men, that they might know the certainty of thoſe things, wherein they are inſtructed; how much more may a corruption of moral principles be ſuppos'd to ſpread itſelf among men, in ſuch caſes, where the morality of any action is leſs obvious or demonſtrable, and they have not any deciſive law or teſtimony, from which there lies no appeal, to determine them?

AN artiſt, in deſigning or forming any work, will make uſe of his eye; yet where he cannot by the ſight of it judge or proceed with that exactneſs, which is requiſite, he will certainly think it the ſafeſt way to apply his rule. What is here obſerv'd, may be proper to give us ſome notion of the difference between the light of natural reaſon, and that of reveal'd religion. In ſome caſes, the great lines of our duty are ſo viſible, that we need only conſult the eye of our own underſtanding to direct us what we are to do: But there being many caſes, wherein we cannot judge, concerning the moral obligations we may be under, with equal certainty; and very few, which do not admit of one ſpecious objection or other to perplex them, God has been pleas'd, for our better information, to give us a ſtanding meaſure of our duty, which if we truly regulate our judgments or practice by, we cannot poſſibly err, or do amiſs. But the difference in point of advantage between the rule of natural and reveal'd religion, cannot be better illuſtrated, than by the following words of St. *Peter*; if by prophecy we only underſtand what in the ſcripture ſenſe it often imports, divine inſtruction in general. *We have alſo*, ſays he, *a more ſure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that you take heed, as unto a light, that ſhineth in a dark place: Knowing this firſt, that no prophecy of the ſcripture is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God ſpake as they were mov'd by the Holy Ghoſt* *.

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[*] *Difficilimum factu à diis ortis fidem non habere, quanquam nec argumentis, nec rationibus certis eorum ratio confirmetur.* Cic. in fragm.

Will the deiſts now pretend, that a divine revelation is not better adapted to the common inſtruction of mankind, than any human method of inſtructing them whatever? Or will they ſay, that it is indifferent to men, whether they have a clear and certain, or an obſcure and fallible rule to walk by; a rule, which cannot fail them; or a rule, which has hitherto fail'd all mankind, the greateſt, the beſt, and wiſeſt of men in all ages; and the defects whereof are ſtill viſible in all the world, where reveal'd religion has not been taught or eſtabliſh'd? And yet theſe are the things, how incongruous or unreaſonable ſoever in the bare propoſal of them, which the deiſt, that mighty pretender to reaſon, muſt ſay, if he would ſay any thing at all, in anſwer to what we have aſſerted, concerning the expediency of divine revelation, whether conſider'd as a rule of faith, or of life.

II. Man in his natural ſtate wanted a more perfect knowledge of the motives, upon which he might have been moſt effectually induc'd to diſcharge his duty.

Knowledge is one of the main principles of human action; and indeed a man ought never to do any thing contrary to the light of it, tho' there are ſome particular caſes, wherein he may be oblig'd to act, without his knowing the diſtinct reaſons, upon which he is ſo oblig'd. But, generally ſpeaking, it might be expected from rational agents, that they ſhould do nothing but what they apprehend in the nature of it fit and reaſonable to be done.

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* 2 *Pet.* 1. 19, 20, 21.

We find, notwithſtanding, there are other ſprings of human action, beſides knowledge, which often carry men againſt thoſe maxims and principles, whereby themſelves are ſenſible they ought to be govern'd. Inclination, intereſt, prejudice, or a natural perverſeneſs of temper, often prove the occaſion of a man's *condemning himſelf, in that, which he alloweth*. That authority, wherewith the reaſon of man originally ſpake to the ſenſes, imagination, and paſſions, and could have ſilenc'd them in an inſtant, is now very much impair'd. The body, by which theſe dangerous enemies to reaſon are fed and encourag'd, now ſpeaks in a higher tone, and expects to be heard in its turn, and even gratify'd in its inſolent demands: Nay, it often bribes reaſon, if not to juſtify, at leaſt to palliate and excuſe its diſorders. In ſhort, the ſervants in their preſent rebellious ſtate, are grown ſo refractory and imperious, that even where they ſuffer the maſter, who alone ought to govern, to be conſulted; yet if he do not anſwer in their favour, they often aſſume a liberty both of diſputing and diſobeying his orders.

To the end therefore, that reaſon may be re-eſtabliſh'd in her throne, and have her commands duly executed, it is not enough that ſhe preſcribe to us what we ought to do, or what we are convinc'd is fit and reaſonable to be done, but we muſt alſo employ ſuch conſiderations, which may more powerfully affect us, with regard to our real intereſts, than thoſe concupiſcence may furniſh, towards carrying us another way, than the light of our own underſtanding directs: For how bright ſoever that light may be, in repreſenting any practical truth to us; yet we ſhall be apt to conſider ſuch a truth, if we have no end to ſerve in following it, as little more than matter of mere ſpeculation, without any ſenſible power to influence our practice.

Men, therefore, without the benefit of divine revelation, having only an imperfect knowledge at the beſt of certain principles highly neceſſary to enforce the practice of a ſtrict morality, and to render the law of their minds of ſuperior force to that, which wars ſo ſtrongly in their members, we are not to wonder that they are very corrupt in their manners; we ought perhaps rather to attribute it to a ſpecial preventing grace of God, that the heathens in ſeveral parts of the world, conſidering how little they knew, with any certainty, concerning thoſe principles, have not really been more corrupt. For,

1. The doctrine of a future ſtate was no general or fundamental article of their faith, at leaſt they had not that ſettled belief of it, which was neceſſary to give one of the ſtrongeſt motives to a virtuous life, its full power and force. Thoſe who believe, that

their ſouls are to periſh with their bodies, will naturally give themſelves up to all manner of ſenſual gratifications. For men invincibly deſiring to be happy, and finding their happineſs only in pleaſure; where they have little or no aſſurance of any enjoyment in another life, they will think themſelves the more concern'd to make ſure of the enjoyments in this life, and to improve their taſte of them, as much as they can. This is the common language of ſuch perſons; *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die* [*]. *Our time is ſhort, and in the death of a man there is no remedy: For we are born at all adventures, and we ſhall be hereafter as though we had never been: For the breath of our noſtrils is as ſmoak, and a little ſpark in the moving of the heart; which being extinguiſh'd, our bodies ſhall be turn'd into aſhes, and our ſpirits vaniſh as the ſoft air. Our time is a very ſhadow, that paſſeth away; and after our end there is no returning. Come on therefore, let us enjoy the good things, that are at preſent; and let us ſpeedily uſe the creatures, like as in youth. Let no flower of the ſpring paſs by us; let none of us go without his part of voluptuouſneſs. For this is our portion, and our lot is this. Let us oppreſs the poor righteous man; let us not ſpare the widow; nor reverence the ancient grey hairs of the aged. Let our ſtrength be the law of juſtice* [‡].

Yet I would by no means infer from theſe general maxims, that all perſons, who do not believe a future ſtate, are equally corrupt. There is a great deal in natural temper, in education, in the different circumſtances of life, and other accidental conſiderations, which may incline one man to the practice of certain vices, or virtues, more than another. It is poſſible too, there may be ſome unbelievers, who by a due exerciſe of their reaſon, may be brought to conclude, that ſetting aſide the conſideration of another life, the practice of temperance and juſtice, and other virtues, have really a more direct tendence to promote our preſent happineſs, than a conduct wherein no regard is had to any virtuous principles. Others again may ſuppoſe, that there is ſomething in the very idea of virtue ſo excellent, ſo amiable, and praiſe-worthy, that we ſhall be ſufficiently compenſated, without any other reward, for all the hardſhips and ſelf-denials, to which we may be expos'd in her ſervice. And there are ſome perhaps, who may go even ſo far, as to infer, that the law, which God has preſcrib'd as the rule of our actions, the law which to that end is written in ſuch legible characters on the table of man's heart, ought to be obey'd, tho' our obedience might not hereafter have any conſequences, wherewith we could be affected.

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[*] 1 *Cor.* 15. 32. *Iſaiah* 22. 13.

[‡] *Wiſd.* 2. 1, 2, *&c.*

But theſe are only concluſions form'd by men of great minds and good underſtandings: And tho' it is, without doubt, generally true, that a life of ſtrict morality, is, upon the whole matter, and every thing conſider'd, moſt conducing to all the real intereſts of men in this world, were there nothing to follow; yet it will be very difficult to perſuade men in particular caſes, where they can gratify their criminal inclinations to pleaſure, without ſhame or diſcovery, or do an act of injuſtice, in order to ſerve ſome worldly deſign, they have much at heart, with impunity, that they ought not to improve ſuch occaſions to the advantage, for which they ſo opportunely preſent themſelves. We grant too, that virtue is in the bare idea and contemplation of it very amiable and engaging; that men at leaſt ought to render themſelves her votaries, out of pure reſpect to the dignity of their own minds, and a deſire of giving them ſtill greater perfection. Theſe are fine truths in the theory, but which thoſe ancient philoſophers, who improv'd them moſt, ſeldom reduc'd to practice. If we may judge from the influence theſe ſpeculations had on their conduct, they will ſtill go but a little way towards reclaiming men from ſuch vices, which they are tempted to by ſtrong inclination, or whereof they have contracted any long or ſettled habits. However men may expreſs their admiration and eſteem for virtue, on the account of her beauty; yet few have ſo great generoſity of mind as to eſpouſe her entirely without a dowry. How difficult a thing do we find it, even to perſuade thoſe, who believe the future and ſpiritual rewards of religion, that there is any ſolid happineſs in this world, but in ſenſual or other worldly enjoyments. But where men look upon death as a kind of annihilation, and are therefore profeſſedly, and upon principle, men of pleaſure, the mere name or idea of virtue will ſignify little towards curbing any vicious inclination, which they feel the power of in their hearts. Nature, on ſuch an occaſion, will prove too obſtinate for a bright thought, and a cold notion of what is fit, and decent, and honourable, will too eaſily give way to the ſtrong and violent impreſſions of ſenſible objects: And tho', in the laſt place, it is certain, that without any reſpect to futurity, men ought to obey God in whatever he has preſcrib'd as his will; yet if the ſanction of rewards and puniſhments has generally ſo little effect upon men, who believe a future ſtate of them, as reveal'd in the goſpel; if we find it ſo hard to reclaim ſinners, who know the *terrors* of the Lord, from their evil courſes; or to convince thoſe, who look for a better country, of their indiſpenſable obligation to live righteouſly, ſoberly, and godly in this preſent world; what rational grounds can we have to hope, that even perſons of the beſt natural diſpoſitions,

ſitions, would pay a conſtant and uniform obedience to God, upon a pure principle of duty, who have nothing hereafter to hope or fear from him, and when they can judge with ſo very little certainty, concerning his love or hatred to men, by all that goes before them here?

Should it be ſaid, I have here taken it for granted, that the heathens did not believe a future ſtate; I anſwer, it is highly reaſonable to ſuppoſe, many of them did not believe it, and that ſeveral others had at the beſt but very imperfect and unſettled notions concerning it. If the heathens had generally believ'd a future ſtate, it is ſtrange, that no nation among them, ever publickly profeſs'd, or eſtabliſh'd in any authentick manner, the doctrine of it; and that we are not able to diſcover in ancient hiſtory any certain monuments of ſuch an eſtabliſhment. However, whether it were general, or not, it will be a very juſt inference from what has been ſaid, that in proportion as the belief of another life is leſs firm, the influence of it upon the lives of men will be attended with leſs wholſome and ſenſible effects.

Now it will not, I think, be diſputed, that the heathens were, generally ſpeaking, under no clear or ſettled conviction of mind concerning a future life: They talk'd indeed of the ſhades below, of the *Elyzian* fields, and the ghoſts of departed men; but there was ſomething ſo irrational, and even ridiculous in the popular account of theſe things, that they were rather look'd upon as ſubjects, proper for a poet's imagination to diſplay itſelf upon, than as having any real grounds ſufficient to convince the judgment of grave and thinking men. It is evident indeed, whatever traditions might have been cited, or natural reaſons aſſign'd, to prove the immortality of the ſoul, yet the wiſeſt and moſt learned of the heathen made it no firm and ſtanding article of their faith: Even thoſe, who believ'd the immateriality of the ſoul, upon which one of the moſt convincing arguments to prove it immortal, is founded; yet were diffident as to this latter article, and expreſs'd themſelves with ſo much uncertainty upon it, as argued they were not convinc'd of it fully, at leaſt not conſtantly, at all times; which might probably be one reaſon why they ſo ſeldom enforc'd the duties either of morality, or piety, from this conſideration.

Admitting then, that the natural proofs of a future ſtate could be ſufficiently made out in the ordinary way of human reaſoning, yet it would be an act of the greateſt goodneſs in God, to eſtabliſh ſo important an article, ſtill upon a more clear and ſolid foundation, in bringing *life and immortality to light*, by means of a ſpecial revelation. The deiſts muſt allow this to be a method, whereby the common errors and defects of human underſtanding are much better provided for, with a remedy. For if thoſe men, who were moſt exact in their enquiries, and made the greateſt diſcoveries, concerning the principles of natural religion, could not perfectly remove their private doubts, as to a point, wherein natural reaſon gave them ſome competent aſſiſtance, there was little to be expected from the reaſonings of the vulgar upon it, towards their own ſatisfaction.

2. MAN had alſo very imperfect notions, wherein he wanted to be rectify'd, concerning a future judgment. I am ſenſible this article is commonly conſider'd, as having a viſible connexion with the former; and therefore it is not unuſual with writers, in repreſenting the advantages of divine revelation, to treat of theſe two articles promiſcuouſly. But I take it they admit of a very diſtinct conſideration, with regard to the influence, which they ſeverally have on the conduct of men; and that they do not neceſſarily imply or infer each other. For 'tis very poſſible, that a man may believe his ſoul immortal, and yet be under no apprehenſions of his having a formal authoritative ſentence to be paſs'd upon him, after his death. There are men who believe a God, and yet deny that he takes any notice of their actions; they queſtion, whether there be *knowledge in the moſt high? and what the almighty is, that they ſhould fear him, or what profit they ſhould have in praying unto him?* It is not unreaſonable for ſuch men to conclude, that tho' their ſouls will ſubſiſt in a ſeparate ſtate, when their bodies are diſſolv'd, yet God will not judge, or call them to account for ſuch actions, in that ſtate, which eſcap'd his knowledge, or at leaſt which he took no judicial cognizance of here. It is probable, many of the greateſt libertines, who have no manner of awe upon their minds, from the conſideration of a future judgment; yet cannot fully perſuade themſelves, that the noble principle within them, whoſe operations and qualities are altogether diſtinct from thoſe of the body, ſhould neverthele ſs depend, as to its exiſtence, upon the life of the body.

IT is not eaſy for men, eſpecially men of looſe principles, to argue againſt ſuch inclinations or deſires, as are very natural to them. Now one of the ſtrongeſt deſires, which nature has implanted in us, is that of ſelf-preſervation, which is ſo ſtrong, even with reſpect to the body, that frail and inferior part of us, that we ſee how eaſily it reconciles great numbers of people to the moſt ſenſible bodily pains and ſufferings of this life; but which deſire therefore, one would think, ſhould hold much ſtronger in relation to the ſoul, the true and immediate cauſe of all our ſenſations, and by virtue of its union wherewith, the body can only be ſaid, except in a very improper ſenſe, to ſuffer or enjoy any thing. It

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muſt indeed be a very ſhocking conſideration to a man, who makes the leaſt reflection on the dignity and excellency of his own nature, that he ſhall one day, notwithſtanding ſo many ſuperior advantages of reaſon, be put upon the ſame level with irrational beings, and die, *like the beaſts that periſh.*

This laudible ambition then, which men have to continue in being, may be ſuppos'd to exert itſelf even in thoſe who are otherways very wicked, after ſo powerful a manner, as to incline them in conſequence of their wiſhes, to believe, that there is a life after this, tho' they believe nothing of a future judgment.

But taking it, as I here do, for granted, that there are deiſts, who not only aſſert the natural immortality of the ſoul, but a divine providence, which takes ſtrict cognizance of all the thoughts, words, and actions of men in this life; I would ask notwithſtanding, what natural proofs they can bring, that when a period is put to our preſent life, we ſhall without paſſing into any intermediate ſtate, be directly conſign'd over to a ſpecial, and, to all eternity, irreverſible judgment of God? Conſidering the many defects both of human underſtanding and will in this life, how ſhort men are of all the perfection, and how unqualify'd for all the happineſs whereof their nature ſeems capable; it might be thought perhaps more credible, had revelation determin'd nothing to the contrary, that before men were to appear at the bar of the heaven of heavens to be finally, and by an irrevocable ſentence ſav'd or condemn'd, they ſhould previouſly be oblig'd to finiſh their courſe of probation, by a gradual aſcent through the ſeveral ſubordinate heavens. This, I grant, is intended for no more than a conjecture, that may however be ſuppos'd to have ſome foundation in the poſſibility of the thing. But if we argue from natural principles; is the ſuppoſition of a judgment to commence immediately after this life, leſs precarious? For where does natural reaſon inform us with any certainty, that this is the only ſtate of tryal, and that there do not remain an indefinite number of other probatory ſtates to be paſs'd through, before the great books of providence, and the divine decrees, out of which we are to be judg'd, ſhall be finally open'd. That there is a judgment to come, is a truth, which in general very ſtrong and natural reaſons may be produc'd for the proof of: But when God will call men before his tribunal to be judg'd, whether after this life ended, or when we may have paſs'd through ſeveral other ſcenes of action, upon the expiration of it; this is what we are not capable of reſolving by any arguments, which the natural light of our minds does appear to afford us. The difficulty of determining this queſtion was probably one cauſe, why the *Pythagoreans* more eaſily embrac'd that notion concerning the tranſmigration of ſouls. And tho' they were not able to eſtabliſh their doctrine upon ſuch grounds as were ſufficient to induce a rational belief of it; yet their adverſaries, on the other hand, did not find it eaſy from any natural principles, ſolidly to confute it; tho' the confutation of it would have been ſtill more difficult, had this celebrated ſect only ſuppos'd, that the ſouls of men were ſucceſſively to paſs out of one human body into another, or into ſome other vehicle, that might be a proper inſtrument of its operations. However, as they believ'd the ſoul of a vicious man, who had made a very ill uſe of his liberty, would alſo in courſe ſhift the ſcene of its reſidence into the body of ſome animal, of a nature and diſpoſition moſt agreeable to the corrupt habits it had formerly contracted; even this doctrine muſt be allow'd, to have had ſome influence at leaſt towards perſuading men to a more ſtrict and regular way of living. A man who thought at all, could not but think himſelf in ſome meaſure concern'd, to lead a more virtuous life, that he might not upon his next tranſlation be condemn'd to lead the life of a brute: Tho' were this indeed all the puniſhment ſome wicked men have to expect, it would not perhaps be in their apprehenſions ſo terrible, as good and pious men may be apt to imagine, who are unwilling to believe into what groſs ſtupidity of mind, and corruption of heart, human nature may degenerate in ſome perſons.

But, not to inſiſt on ſo ſhocking a conſideration, the concluſion I would draw from what has been here ſaid, is, that ſuppoſing the immortality of the ſoul may be made out by clear and convincing arguments, yet no proofs can be drawn from any natural topicks of reaſon to convince us, that judgment will immediately paſs upon ſinners after this life, at leaſt before they enter upon any other ſtate of probation. This ſtill leaves them ſome reſource towards feeding their corruptions, and to the end they may proceed in their evil courſes, with leſs anxiety and terror of mind: Since they can ſtill flatter themſelves with the hopes, that they may one time, or in one ſtate or other, improve the opportunities of their converſion, better than they have done here; and ſo recommend themſelves to the favour of God, and remedy all at laſt, by a more juſt, pious, and regular conduct.

But if God ſhould by an expreſs revelation declare, that he *has appointed for all men once to die, and after this the judgment*; that in conſequence of their being judg'd, *the wicked ſhall go into everlaſting puniſhment, and the righteous into life eternal*: Here the two great ſprings of human action, the love of happineſs, and the fear of miſery, ſhould operate, one would think, with all the force whereof they are capable. How can any temptations or terrors of this world ſtand before that ſtrong and penetrating light, which repreſents to our minds the glories of heaven, and the flames of hell ſhining to all eternity? Upon ſuch a proſpect, it might reaſonably be expected, that all the ideas of ſenſible pleaſure and all apprehenſions of pain, would immediately vaniſh. For tho' we always in ſome degree find our ſelves happy in actual pleaſure, and miſerable in actual pain; yet who would not forego a preſent ſlight enjoyment, and even ſacrifice his predominant paſſion, for the ſake of the true and eternal joys, in certain reverſion? Who again would not be willing to ſuffer ſome ſhort and tranſient, however afflicting pains, in a life, whoſe thread is every moment running off apace, that he may, in a ſtate immediately to ſucceed it, avoid thoſe terrible and exquiſite pains, which will never have an end? Do not we find, that the moſt vicious perſons will chuſe to deny themſelves in many things, and even ſlight great difficulties, and, in certain caſes, imminent dangers, for the ſake of ſomething more ſolid, and important to their intereſts, than what they give up to the expectation of it? Certainly the reaſons of ſuch a choice muſt hold much ſtronger with reſpect to the concerns of eternity; where men really believe upon the authority of divine revelation, that immediately after this life, and according to their good or ill conduct in it, they ſhall enter upon a fix'd and unchangeable ſtate of happineſs or miſery. The very queſtion concerning the preſent advantage of acting upon a virtuous principle, is now out of queſtion; virtue is certainly ſubſervient to our true intereſts, tho' ſhe ſhould not contribute, which yet ſhe commonly does, to promote our temporary intereſts: She is not upon this view, what dull and vulgar minds were before too apt to object, any longer an empty name, or mere form to entertain the ſpeculations of curious men; but ſhe propoſes, what will make us ſolidly and truly happy. *Her reward is with her*; and tho' it may appear ſometimes more ſlow, yet it is ſure at laſt; and ſuch a reward, to which all we can do and ſuffer for her, bears no manner of proportion. In a word, the power ſhe ought to have over us, does not now ſubſiſt on a metaphyſical, which to moſt people is a very jejune way of perſuaſion; but upon motives, of all others, the moſt proper to affect and penetrate the heart.

NEITHER, upon this ſuppoſition of an unchangeable ſtate of reward or puniſhment after this life, can a ſinner flatter himſelf with the hopes of impunity or happineſs at laſt, by deſigning to make a better uſe of his liberty, in any ſuppos'd courſe of a future probation. For when ſentence is once paſt upon him, and the meaſures of his puniſhment awarded to him, he has no after-game to play, no farther opportunities of running, as perhaps he has formerly done, with great numbers of men, who dy'd impenitent at laſt, in a continued circle of ſinning and repenting; but all overtures of grace are now ceas'd, and his ſoul once loſt, is loſt irrecoverably, and for ever.

Upon this principle then, of an immediate judgment to come after this life, the proper arguments to a virtuous, and the moſt powerful reſtraints to a vicious life, appear equally ſtrong in their reſpective and diſtinct operations. Here, and here alone, the true intereſts of religion can be effectually provided for and ſecur'd: And as this article could only be known with certainty ſufficient to attain theſe great ends, till it had been reveal'd by God, we diſcover the expediency of a divine revelation, in reſpect to it, with a force ſo much the more ſenſible, and expreſſive of the divine goodneſs.

3. If the truth of theſe ſeveral principles, I have mention'd, had been clearly demonſtrable from the light of natural reaſon, yet as men do not always act conformably to their ſentiments, even when they are very ſtrong and lively; but ſometimes ſuffer themſelves to be carry'd away by the weight of concupiſcence, in direct oppoſition to them: We have ſtill occaſion, in order to ballance that weight, for all the adventitious helps and motives to religion, that we can poſſibly diſcover or employ.

How firmly ſoever we aſſent to any truth, yet it will be granted to affect us ſtill more powerfully, if inculcated by ſome perſon for whom we have conceiv'd a very high veneration; and eſpecially if we could ſuppoſe him ſpeaking to us by a ſpecial authority or commiſſion from God.

In the former reſpect the heathens had indeed from time to time teachers of natural religion among them, venerable for their age, their learning, and profeſſion, and ſome of them for a greater ſtrictneſs and regularity of manners. A decent regard might have been more eaſily paid to what they ſaid on theſe accounts; but that brought the people under no ſuch obligation to obſerve their inſtructions, as if they had receiv'd them from heaven, or taught in the name of God.

Should *Socrates* or *Confucius* be reſtor'd to life, tho' without any ſpecial character, or any commiſſion given them to diſcover the ſtate of the other world, there are few perſons, who would not take a great deal of pleaſure in hearing them diſcourſe, tho' only upon ſome known and uncontroverted ſubjects of morality or religion; and what they might ſay, would probably have ſome good and wholſome effects on many of their auditors. But ſhould a prophet, or angel from heaven, or ſome being ſuperior to the order of angels, be ſent with authentick credentials to repeat or confirm to us the great truths of natural religion, his authority, tho' we ſhould have learn'd and been aſſur'd of thoſe truths already, yet could not fail at once of awakening our attention more powerfully to them, and leaving more lively and laſting impreſſions of them upon our minds.

Any ſuch perſon, but eſpecially one inveſted with the laſt character, is not to be conſider'd as a mere preacher of religion or morality, but as having the authority of a lawgiver; by whom the meaſures of truth and error, of right and wrong, are not only infallibly determin'd, but whoſe determination carries in it an obliging, and it might reaſonably be expected, an irreſiſtible force. With reſpect to the dignity of ſuch a prophet, what could be more juſt even in a human and natural way of reaſoning, than the following concluſion. *Therefore we ought to give the more earneſt heed, to the things which we have heard, leſt at any time we ſhould let them ſlip* *.

4. Another motive, and one of the moſt powerful to a religious life, which men wanted in a ſtate of natural religion, was the promiſe of a ſupernatural grace and aſſiſtance towards rendring their duty in the ſeveral inſtances of it more practicable to them. Whatever bright or juſt notions men may have concerning religion, how much ſoever they may be inclin'd to practiſe it from the other motives, that have been mention'd, on ſuppoſition, that they might by any means come to the knowledge of them: Yet if, after all, through a conſciouſneſs of their own weakneſs or inability, they look upon their duty as really impracticable, as they could ſtill propoſe to themſelves no ſucceſs in their moſt earneſt and ſincere endeavours to diſcharge it; to what end, would they naturally argue, ſhould we apply our ſelves to the buſineſs of it; or engage in an attempt, which we know beforehand muſt certainly prove fruitleſs and ineffectual in the event?

Now men, in their natural ſtate, were very ſenſible, that human nature was much corrupted; the diſeaſe was every where obſerv'd to reign, and every where complain'd of: But no method of cure could be found out equal to the ſtrength and malignity of it. I do not here diſpute how far a common grace was diſpens'd to mankind in general, in concurrence with which, they might have preſerv'd themſelves much better, than they appear to have done, from the common infection. But whether ſuch a grace, was by any ſecret appointment of God diſpens'd to them, they do not ſeem to have had the leaſt apprehenſions concerning it, and ſo could not be in the leaſt influenc'd towards a more faithful and vigorous

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* *Heb.* 2. 1.

gorous diſcharge of their duty by any conſideration of it. They pray'd indeed to God for ſucceſs in their deſigns, but they were not the internal motions of his grace, which they had regard to in their prayers, but only the over-ruling diſpoſitions of his providence. If ſome of them had any notion of an illuminating grace, and ſo might pray to God in certain great and arduous undertakings, for his direction; yet as to a ſpirit of ſanctification, which might operate upon their hearts, and produce any holy or ſpiritual effects in them, it ſeems to have been a principle altogether unknown to them.

A revelation then, which ſhould aſſure men, that *God will put his ſpirit within them, and cauſe them to walk in his ſtatutes*; *that he will pour out his ſpirit upon all fleſh*; which ſhall *help their infirmities*, ſo that *they ſhall never be tempted above what they are able*. A revelation to this end, one would think, could never fail of animating our religious endeavours to ſuch a degree, that no difficulties whatever ſhould be of any force to diſcourage them. Here is an effectual remedy provided againſt the power of natural corruption. *If God*, if the Holy Spirit of God, *be for us, who*, or what, *can be againſt us?* We may upon this principle eaſily anſwer all the arguments to ſin, how ſtrong or ſpecious ſoever they may appear, whether from a conſideration of our own weakneſs, or the ſtrength of our enemy. For we ſhall have nothing now to do, but in a ſincere and pious diſpoſition of mind, to *come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

But let it, after all, be granted, that man without the benefit of divine revelation had been capable of diſcovering in a clear and convincing light all the grounds and relations of his duty, and all the motives which might have effectually engag'd him to diſcharge it; yet a divine revelation was ſtill wanting, in order to his more perfect knowledge.

III. Concerning the means of reconciling himſelf to God upon his failure in it. For what powerful inducements ſoever we may have to love virtue, and to engage, on other accounts, heartily in her intereſts; yet if we apprehend all our endeavours to ſerve her, will at laſt prove fruitleſs and loſt labour to our ſelves, this is ſuch a diſcouragement, as few perſons, eſpecially under circumſtances of any violent temptation, will be able to ſurmount. This was the caſe of men in a ſtate of natural religion; they were ſenſible, in the firſt place, that the law which was preſcrib'd as the rule of their duty, was holy and juſt, and good; but they had offended againſt this law, and were thereby become obnoxious to the diſpleaſure of a juſt and almighty God, the author of it; they concluded from the many viſible acts of his goodneſs in the works of creation and providence, that God was alſo good; yet they were ſtill under much ſtronger apprehenſions, that his juſtice would puniſh the ſinner, than that his goodneſs would pardon the penitent. For they look'd upon acts of juſtice as ſtrictly due to them, which they had not only incurr'd the penalties of by their firſt tranſgreſſion, but continually provok'd by their repeated offences. Acts of goodneſs, on the other hand, are ſuch, as no perſon, in a proper ſenſe, can deſerve, and to which they were conſcious in their own minds they could not have done, much leſs had really done any thing to recommend themſelves. Their expectations therefore of puniſhment, as they were much ſtronger, were much more reaſonable too, than their pretenſions to favour. Indeed acts of favour being free, and wholly depending on the good pleaſure of the donor; till he has declar'd what he intends to do in reference to them, it cannot with any certainty be determin'd, what he will do.

Tho' it was a queſtion therefore of the laſt importance to men, whether God, upon the repentance of ſinners, would pardon their ſins, and remit the puniſhment due to them; yet it was a queſtion at the ſame time, concerning which, human reaſon could never come to any clear or determinate reſolution. And in a caſe, on which the eternal happineſs or miſery of men depends, they are not uncertain conjectures, or doubtful diſputations about what may poſſibly, or even probably happen, that can give the mind any true or perfect ſatisfaction, but only ſuch aſſurances, upon which it may firmly and entirely repoſe itſelf. A ſinner, whoſe guilt continually repreſents to him an incens'd and almighty God, with a rod of vengeance in his hand, will find but poor conſolation, in putting queſtions, whether, after all, he will ſhew mercy and compaſſion; or in ſaying, *it may be ſo*, and, *who can tell?* When if it ſhould happen to be otherways, he is loſt, irrecoverably loſt and undone for ever. This one ſuppoſition, that poſſibly, after all, God may not pardon ſinners; and that they ſhall find no place for repentance, tho' they ſeek it with tears, has ſomething in it ſo dreadful and terrifying, as might reaſonably be expected to incline a deiſt to wiſh at leaſt that God had by an expreſs revelation declar'd his will upon an article, without the firm belief whereof, (which there is no certain foundation for in natural religion) no man, who believes he has a ſoul to be ſav'd or damn'd, can during the intervals of ſerious reflection, be ever in an eaſy or compos'd temper of mind.

This was a caſe, which it did not only concern particular ſinners, but the whole race of mankind to be reſolv'd in: *For all* *men had ſinn'd, and fallen ſhort of the glory of God.* Yet however it was the ſubject of their common enquiry and conſideration, all they were able to conclude from it was, that conſidering the goodneſs and benignity of the divine nature, God might poſſibly be merciful to ſinners, and receive them to favour. So far the *Ninevites* went in their way of reaſoning, and reaſon improv'd by all the advantages of learning and philoſophy could never go farther. *Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we periſh not?* But if all they could be aſſur'd of was only, that a good God might perhaps, upon their humiliation, pardon their ſins, had they not, on the other hand, at leaſt equal reaſon to apprehend, that perhaps a juſt God might not pardon them.

Besides, acts of goodneſs being arbitrary, whatever we ſuppoſe a good God inclin'd to do, there may be very ſtrong conſiderations with regard to the ends of government, why a wiſe God ſhould not do it. So that except the deiſt can ſhew, which I think no deiſt has yet undertaken to do, nor any ſober perſon will aſſert, that God is oblig'd in ſtrict juſtice to pardon penitent ſinners, no certain arguments, and certainty is what we are now to ſeek after, can be drawn from the goodneſs of God, that he will pardon him. But,

2. Let all that has been ſaid on this point go for nothing: Let us grant, ſinners may be infallibly aſſur'd from natural principles, that God, upon their repentance, will pardon their ſins; yet except they know wherein the true notion, and proper acts of repentance conſiſt, how, or upon what reaſonable grounds, can we perſuade them to the practice of it? Men will naturally excuſe themſelves from working in the dark, and ſetting upon an unknown duty. Now tho' the light of our own minds does indeed inform us with a much clearer evidence concerning the nature of repentance, than concerning the will of God to pardon the penitent; yet if in fact we conſider the little uſe men have ordinarily made of the light of nature to this end, we may obſerve, that notwithſtanding they had a general and confus'd notion of repentance, as a means of reconciling ſinners to God, yet they did not really and diſtinctly underſtand, what it was to repent; and therefore a divine revelation will appear, if not abſolutely neceſſary, at leaſt very highly expedient even towards a more perfect diſcovery of this important duty to us, in the ſeveral branches of it.

Let us obſerve the method, whereby the *Ninevites* teſtify'd their repentance when awaken'd by the voice of a ſpecial prophet from heaven. *They proclaim'd a faſt*, and by expreſs command of the royal authority, *neither man nor beaſt, herd or flock, was to taſte any thing;*

thing; nay, *both man and beaſt were to be cover'd with ſackcloth, and cry mightily unto God* [*]. This command, with reſpect to the people of *Nineveh*, had a reaſonable foundation; but as irrational creatures were indifferently oblig'd to ſhare in the ceremonial and external teſtimonies of their humiliation, this diſcovers the crude and confuſ'd notions which they had of repentance in general.

We grant indeed, they were farther exhorted *to turn, every one, from his evil way, and from the violence that was in their hands* [†]. This was a direct admonition towards a true and proper act of repentance, yet which is ſtill ſhort of that act, which gives repentance its perfection, and conſiſts in a real change of mind from ſinful to virtuous and holy diſpoſitions. But whether it were from any inſtructions of the prophet, which are unrecorded, or from the natural reaſon of the thing, that the *Ninevites* apprehended it incumbent on them to exerciſe that lower, tho' eſſential act of repentance, they certainly had in this reſpect juſter notions concerning the duty of true penitents, than the generality of thoſe who liv'd in the moſt refin'd and polite ages of the heathen world.

If we conſider the methods they uſ'd in order to appeaſe the offended deity, and towards averting any impending or future evil, there was nothing in them wherewith the heart was, or, in their apprehenſions, ought to have been affected. For they had ſcarce any notion, except what diſcover'd itſelf in ſome few great men who recommend inward purity, of paying to God a worſhip properly ſpiritual. They rather choſe therefore to come before him with much ceremony, and many coſtly oblations, and ſometimes with the blood of human ſacrifices: A method of atonement more provoking to God, than the very crimes, for which it could well be ſuppos'd to atone. In ſhort, whatever expectation they had, that the blood of bulls, of goats, or of men, might poſſibly be a means of taking away ſin; yet they appear to have had little or no regard in their worſhip towards making themſelves more perfect, *as pertaining to the conſcience*. The prieſts, whoſe buſineſs it was to inſtruct them in the ritual of religion, and to ſee it perform'd, ſeldom, if ever, troubled themſelves to inculcate the duties of a moral and *reaſonable ſervice*. And indeed as ſacrifice, tho' more expenſive, is naturally more agreeable to the corrupt inclinations of men, than obedience, the inſtitution of it, was the moſt artful and effectual method to keep up a ſenſe of religion, ſuch as it was, in a corrupt world. It is alſo eaſier for us to go through a long courſe of penance or bodily exerciſe, than to offer violence to any one paſſion, which has got the dominion over our hearts: And provided a man can but indulge to himſelf in reſerve the ſin of his ſoul, he will be willing to ſacrifice in many reſpects the eaſe and appetites of the body to it. The truth of this general reflection muſt however be allow'd, that a ſtrict and pure morality is far more difficult to be practis'd, than the external rules of a ſuperſtitious worſhip; eſpecially ſuch of them, as do in their own nature tend to favour and promote corruption.

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[*] *Jon.* 3. 5, 7, 8.

[†] ℣. 8.

But cannot the duties of repentance then be clearly and diſtinctly deduc'd from the common principles of natural religion? We do not deny that they may; but ſtill there is a wide difference, betwixt our ſeeing the reaſonableneſs of any truth, when once reveal'd to us, and our being able to diſcover the ſeveral grounds and reaſons out of which it ariſes, antecedently to ſuch a revelation. Man is naturally apt to grow vain, and to think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think. When any thing he had not taken notice of before is obſerv'd to him, it might, in his opinion, have been eaſy for him, had he apply'd his thoughts that way, to have made it the ſubject of his own obſervation: He wonders how ſo very plain and obvious a matter could hitherto eſcape him. This vanity of man is too viſible, not only in his way of judging concerning natural cauſes and effects, or the works of human art, but in the judgment he makes, concerning moral or religious ſubjects; and his arrogance ſometimes carries him in all theſe reſpects ſo far, as to make him triumph in a pretended diſcovery of what he has really borrow'd from others, tho' perhaps he has been ſo very negligent and ungrateful, that he has even forgot to whoſe help or aſſiſtance he was originally oblig'd.

The queſtion then, between us and the deiſts, is not ſtrictly, what human reaſon could poſſibly have done towards aſcertaining the truths of natural religion to men, but what in fact it has done; and how little therefore it would, in all probability, be capable of doing to this end hereafter, if left, without any guide, to its own conduct? We ſee how far it fail'd the generality of men in ſo very obvious an article, as that concerning repentance; why therefore ſhould we ſuppoſe, it would have afforded men a more clear or true light, towards their information concerning ſuch truths, which lie yet more deep and conceal'd from the eye of human underſtanding?

It is poſſible, in the nature of the thing, for a man, of an extraordinary force and penetration of mind, to make a conſiderable progreſs in the mathematicks, without the aſſiſtance of any book written in that ſcience; will any one therefore ſay, that no books ought to be written in it, or that *Euclid* could have no reaſonable or uſeful end in publiſhing his Elements? The deiſt may with equal reaſon pretend to argue againſt the uſe and expediency of divine revelation, ſuppoſing it poſſible for us to make the truths, it eſtabliſhes, clearly out upon the principles of human reaſon; tho' there are indeed ſome of them, which it highly concerns us to know, whereof, we cannot, after all, have any knowledge, but by ſuch a revelation.

Chap. III. Prop. III.

That there are certain characters, both internal and external, whereby perſons, to whom a divine revelation has not been immediately made, may yet have reaſonable and ſufficient grounds to believe it: And firſt, of ſuch characters of it as are internal.

IT is not ſufficient to prove, that a divine revelation is poſſible, and that it is highly expedient ſuch a revelation, in order to the common benefit and inſtruction of mankind, ſhould be made; except we can alſo prove farther, that thoſe, to whom it is immediately made, may communicate it after a manner to others, which may be proper to convince them that it is, in truth, a revelation from God: For otherways, what is reveal'd to one man could only oblige his own private aſſent; and ſo there would be a neceſſity, in order to attain the ends of revelation in general, that God ſhould immediately reveal himſelf to every man in particular.

A particular revelation to every man, would indeed be ſufficient for every man's conviction, as to the divine authority of it; but not ſo agreeable to our common notions of the divine wiſdom, as a regular and uniform conveyance of reveal'd truths to the minds of men. For there is nothing more inconſiſtent with the character of a wiſe agent, than to employ any extraordinary or ſuperfluous means, where he can effect his deſigns by fewer and more ſimple means.

Besides, upon a ſuppoſition, that every man, to whom the benefit of a divine revelation is deſign'd to extend, ſhould be immediately inſpir'd, mankind would be continually expos'd to the danger of error, or the illuſions of wicked and deſigning men; except we ſhould ſuppoſe too at the ſame time, that the ſpirit of revelation were to reſt upon every man throughout the whole courſe of his life; which would require a conſtant and uninterrupted ſeries of miracles ſtill more irreconcileable with our ideas of the divine wiſdom.

BUT if the ſpirit of revelation were only to reſt upon a man, at certain periods of his life, then, during the intervals of its receſs, it is poſſible the impreſſions formerly made on his mind, how ſtrong ſoever, may yet wear off or be defac'd in ſuch a manner, that he cannot perfectly recollect them. He muſt ſtill then have recourſe, for entire ſatisfaction in ſuch points, to other perſons, in whoſe minds the evidence of the truths reveal'd to them, is more freſh and powerful: But who, after all, if they have not a power of working miracles, in confirmation of what they report to him, or do not give him other proper proofs of their inſpiration and probity, may ſtill deceive him; as the old prophet in *Bethel**, upon a falſe pretence of a later revelation, and by giving himſelf a ſtrong and ſuperior air of confidence, deceiv'd him who was ſent to propheſy againſt the altar there. We may obſerve, that perſons of weaker minds, or ſuch, who if they do not want ſtrength of mind, have a greater diffidence of themſelves, are often overborn by perſons of a very bold and contagious imagination to aſſent to what is ſaid, againſt the former convictions of their own minds, and ſometimes before they well or diſtinctly know, what it really is they aſſent to.

IT is neceſſary therefore to the great end, for which a divine revelation is made, that there ſhould be certain marks or characters, whereby it may be diſtinguiſh'd, as ſuch, by thoſe, to whom it is not immediately made. How could God almighty otherways require our belief of it? Since it can never be our duty to believe, what we have no certain way of knowing to be credible.

OF theſe marks or characters I begin with thoſe, that are commonly call'd and reputed internal; which are not, we allow, equally ſtrong and convincing; eſpecially ſuch of them as are only propos'd by way of negation; yet even theſe, tho' they do not directly prove a divine revelation to be true, yet as the want of them would directly prove the pretence of it to be falſe, will fall very properly under our preſent conſideration.

1. NOTHING can be the ſubject of a divine revelation, that implies in the nature of it a contradiction. Whatever arguments, for inſtance, may be brought to prove the truth of a revelation, which aſſerts that two bodies may be in one place, or one body in two places at once, we may be aſſur'd ſuch a revelation can have no

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* 1 *Kings* 13. 16, 17, 18, 19.

real, but only a pretended authority; becauſe God could have no end worthy of his wiſdom or goodneſs in making it: Since we cannot have a greater aſſurance that a contradictory propoſition is reveal'd from God, than we have already, that a contradiction cannot be true. And if we muſt in all diſputable caſes be determin'd by the ſtronger evidence, then where the evidence, as we now ſuppoſe it in this particular caſe, is equal on both ſides, we can determine or believe nothing on either ſide; but muſt ſuſpend our aſſent, till ſome higher degree of evidence, which yet it is impoſſible to conceive there ſhould be any ſcope for one way or other, ſhould oblige us to give it.

I ſpeak here upon a ſuppoſition, that either of the forementton'd, or any like contradictory propoſitions could really be propos'd by a divine authority as articles of faith: But where they are only inferr'd from certain propoſitions, divinely reveal'd, and from which they do not directly or neceſſarily follow; there the preſumption, that they are not really articles of divine revelation, grows much ſtronger, from the poſſibility of error or miſtake in thoſe, who draw ſuch inferences: It being much more credible, that men may be deceiv'd in the judgments they make concerning the ſenſe of a propoſition, which is not ſelf-evident, than that they ſhould have any reaſonable grounds to believe a plain and evident contradiction.

2. We can admit nothing as a ſubject of divine revelation, which contradicts the moral and unchangeable rules of natural reaſon. The law of nature being the law of God, and not depending even upon his own poſitive inſtitution, but the eſſential rectitude and perfections of his nature, it is equally impoſſible for him to deny himſelf, and to cancel the obligations of that law. To ſuppoſe him capable of forming ſuch a deſign, or of revealing his intention to that end, is to attribute to him two contradictory wills, or, what is equally irreconcileable to our ideas of a moſt perfect being, a reveal'd will directly inconſiſtent with his true and ſecret will.

Should any doctrine therefore or principle of reveal'd religion be pretended directly or indirectly to authorize ſin or impiety; ſuch a doctrine or principle cannot be founded either in the expreſs letter or intention of the divine law, but only in the ignorance or corruption of the interpreter. As any judgment contrary to the ſtanding and known laws of a nation, is not ſuppos'd to be the judgment of the prince, or the legiſlature, but to proceed from ſome indirect motives, in perſons who pretend, and whoſe proper office it ſhould be, to explain and declare the ſenſe of them.

Yet we are to diſtinguiſh between the general obligation of a law, and the exceptions, which may be made to it, by virtue of a diſpenſing power in the ſovereign authority. It is matter of general obligation to men not to deprive other perſons of their lives, or of any thing to which they have a natural or legal right. A great many moral reaſons may be aſſign'd for this, and in particular that excellent rule, of not doing to others, what, in a ſuppos'd change of circumſtances, we ſhould think injurious, or unreaſonable to be done to our ſelves: Yet God being the abſolute proprietor of the lives and fortunes of men, and having them entirely in his own diſpoſition, may order one man to take away the life of another, or even a father to ſacrifice his ſon; or he may authorize private perſons to diſpoſſeſs their neighbours of what they juſtly poſſeſs, and even whole nations to drive out other nations from before them. Theſe are prerogative acts of God, which flow from his right of abſolute dominion over his creatures, and render certain actions, which would be otherways the greateſt moral evils, not only lawful, but ſometimes matter of ſtrict and indiſpenſable duty to us.

3. Nothing can reaſonably be aſſented to as matter of divine revelation, which, tho' neither impoſſible in itſelf abſolutely conſider'd, nor repugnant to any moral law, or any eſſential perfection of the divine nature, yet contradicts any known, certain, and inconteſtable facts; becauſe we cannot have a clearer evidence that any revelation is true, than that ſuch facts have really and in truth happen'd otherways, than ſuch a revelation pretends to report. Should one, for inſtance, affirm it has been reveal'd to him, that *Alexander the Great* liv'd in the ſecond century of the chriſtian church, and *Julius Cæſar* in the third, it is hard to conceive how any evidence could be brought to confirm this pretended revelation, ſtronger than the grounds, we ſhould have for ſuſpecting it. For the like reaſon, ſhould any one aſſert, with *Mahomet*, he has had a ſpecial revelation from God, that the virgin *Mary* was *Aaron*'s ſiſter, or that *Jeſus Chriſt* did not really ſuffer, or die upon the croſs, but only in the appearance of another perſon very much reſembling him, contrary to all the teſtimonies, whereof any matter of fact is capable, tho' ſuch a man were able, which *Mahomet* was not, to do ſome things, beſides the common courſe of natural cauſes, and, at firſt view, above the power of them, yet we ſhould ſtill have ſo ſtrong reaſons to ſuſpect him for an impoſtor, as his pretended credentials would not be of force enough ſufficient to remove.

These are all the negative proofs concerning a divine revelation; which I have thought neceſſary to mention; I ſhall now proceed to conſider;

4. Some of thoſe, which are more direct and poſitive. It is, in the firſt place, a ſtrong preſumption, that a revelation is true, and from God, when it teaches ſuch doctrines, or enjoins ſuch precepts, as will naturally oppoſe its own reception or eſtabliſhment. When any man takes upon him to introduce a new religion, he does it with a deſign, ſuppoſing him capable of any regular or conſiſtent deſign at all, to have it believ'd at leaſt, if not to gain open and profeſs'd converts to it: But now the way, humanly ſpeaking, to have it believ'd, is not to advance notions oppoſite to thoſe, which have hitherto univerſally obtain'd, and have perhaps an expreſs ſanction of the civil power; any more than to require any duty contrary to the ſtrongeſt paſſions, and moſt important intereſts of men in this life, is a probable way of recommending it effectually to their practice. An impoſtor, who ſhould project ſuch a ſcheme of propagating a new religion, would deſtroy his end by the very means which he employs in order to accompliſh it.

Mahomet was ſo ſenſible of this, that, conſiſtently enough with his deſign, he accommodated his doctrine to the corrupt notions, and his maxims of life to the moſt irregular and vicious inclinations of men: He made the preſent happineſs of his followers to conſiſt in temporal proſperity and enjoyments, at leaſt he propos'd them as the principal motives in this life, of a faithful adherence to his religion; and as a farther reward of it in another life, he propos'd a paradiſe, abounding with an affluence of ſtill greater and more affecting ſenſual delights. We grant however, he taught ſome doctrines very oppoſite to thoſe, which were generally receiv'd in the heathen world, and particularly with reſpect to the perfect unity and ſimplicity of the divine nature; but it is to be conſider'd, that ſome new doctrines are neceſſary towards the introduction of a new religion; and that the doctrines of this falſe prophet, which had any reaſonable foundation, were much leſs oppos'd, on account of the growth of chriſtianity, which at that time extended itſelf ſo wide, and the principles whereof, were well known, even to great numbers of thoſe, who were not in a diſpoſition to receive them. To which we may add, that the ſecular powers, which had ſo univerſally conſpir'd to ſupport paganiſm, were then too very much broken, and men began every where to be more and more ſenſible of the groſs errors and idolatry of the pagan worſhip.

But ſhould one appear in the character of a prophet, at a time when there are none of theſe circumſtances to facilitate the reception of his doctrine; at a time when it is every where evil ſpoken of, perſecuted, and decry'd, not only as an innovation, contrary to the rites and religion eſtabliſh'd by the laws, but as highly impious and prophane in itſelf; here we have one of the ſtrongeſt moral aſſurances, ſuch a perſon can give of his own ſincerity, and conſequently of the truth of that revelation, which is reported by him. For what but the clear and certain evidence of its truth ſhould induce him to engage in a deſign, to all human appearance, abſolutely impracticable, and upon which, were he an impoſtor, he could much leſs expect the divine benediction; beſides that, it might expoſe him and his followers to ſuffer the greateſt miſeries and calamities of this life, which human nature is capable of ſuffering, without any proſpect of reward hereafter.

Such a method of proceeding is ſo contrary to all the ſtanding rules and maxims of ſelf-preſervation and intereſt, whereby men govern themſelves in this world, that conſidering the common vanity and ambition of men, tho' it may not be an infallible ſign of ſincerity in the perſon who engages in it, yet where neither of theſe motives are viſible, it affords us very ſtrong and rational grounds to believe him ſincere.

But the minds of men, ſince I have on this occaſion mention'd the religion of *Mahomet*, were leſs prejudic'd againſt it, as it was ſo viſibly calculated in the two following reſpects, to favour their corrupt paſſions and intereſts. To gratify their love of power and wealth, he authoriz'd them to commit all manner of violence and injuſtice upon thoſe who oppos'd the principles or progreſs of his religion; and to gratify their ſenſuality, he allow'd them to have a plurality of wives, and even to take away the wives of their ſlaves at pleaſure from them.

These were indulgences ſo agreeable to the common and corrupt inclinations of men, that they render'd a ſcheme of religion in many reſpects irrational, and in ſome very ridiculous, yet capable in a ſhort time of drawing vaſt numbers of men over to it; and as it originally ow'd its increaſe to theſe looſe and unjuſt maxims, it has ever ſince been principally ſupported and propagated by them.

Should an author, on the other hand, of any new doctrine or religion, who declares himſelf a preacher ſent from God, inſtead of adapting his rules of life to the vicious inclinations of men, enjoin them, in its full extent, a ſtrict and pure morality; ſhould he reſtrain them from taking the ſword, or employing the ſecular arm towards compelling others to come into his deſign, or giving it a larger compaſs to ſpread in; and only leave them to recommend and ſupport it by the gentle methods of reaſon and perſuaſion: Should the precepts he lays down be ſo far from encouraging a fierce or cruel diſpoſition, or permitting his diſciples to do violence to any man, that they might have a viſible and direct tendence to promote peace upon earth; good-will towards all men: Or ſhould he be ſo far from propoſing to his immediate followers the temporal advantages of this life, that he tells them beforehand, they muſt expect to part with their neareſt and moſt valuable intereſts in it, and has perhaps made this the very condition of their following him: Should he again, inſtead of preſcribing any rules, which may appear in the leaſt to favour impurity, or the more irregular appetites of ſenſe, ſtrictly charge them, that *denying all worldly luſts*, they ſhould *live ſoberly in this preſent world* *; *and be temperate in all things, that they may receive the prize* †: The contrariety, I argue, of ſuch a religion to the natural tempers, and corrupt habits of men, muſt be allow'd to carry the greater evidence of an unbyaſs'd integrity in thoſe, who aſſert it to be divinely reveal'd to them, in proportion as the precepts of it have really leſs force to perſuade: Since nothing but a full conviction of its truth could be ſuppos'd to engage any perſon to atteſt the divine authority of it; and to inculcate thoſe precepts againſt all the motions of ſelf-love from within, and all the oppoſition and prejudices he muſt expect to meet with, in the diſcharge of his office, from other men.

5. IT is a ſtrong preſumption that a revelation is true, and from God, when there is a juſt conſiſtency in the ſeveral parts of it, tho' not made all at once, or to one perſon, but to ſeveral perſons, and at ſeveral times.

THO' 'tis very poſſible to a man, who thinks regularly, to form a conſiſtent ſyſtem of what has neither in truth, or fact, any real foundation; yet when different perſons, of different tempers, capacities, and circumſtances of life, all concur, and at very diſtant periods of time, in purſuing the ſame deſign, and in *ſpeaking the ſame thing*; when the ſcheme of providence, by their miniſtry, gradually opens through a ſucceſſion of many ages, till at laſt it unfolds itſelf in a clear, full, and moſt ſurprizing diſcovery at once, of the great goodneſs, and *manifold wiſdom* of God! This carries in it a ſtrong moral evidence, whereof no perſon can diſpute the certainty, much leſs the credibility, that ſuch men did not really act by combination, or in dependence on one another; but that the whole work was the work of God, and they only the inſtruments, perhaps the blind inſtruments, of executing it. For what could induce men, eſpecially if they were in the leaſt influenc'd by the common motives and maxims of ſelf-love, unanimouſly to purſue a ſcheme for ſo long a time, contrary, in many reſpects, to their intereſt, and which ſometimes expos'd their lives to imminent and certain danger: Tho', after all, it was impoſſible for them to know, but only by that Spirit, whereby they were conducted, how this ſcheme would in the progreſs operate, or what in the event would be the end thereof.

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* *Tit.* 2. 12. † 1 *Cor.* 9. 24, 25.

Yet if a ſucceſſive order of pretended prophets, could poſſibly be thought to have engag'd in ſuch a deſign, ſo oppoſite, on other accounts, to the general maxims and deſigns of this life, upon a motive of vanity or ambition, which are indeed paſſions of a ſtrange force, and often put men upon doing things very extravagant and unaccountable; yet it cannot be imagin'd that ignorant men, of the greateſt ſimplicity of manners, and of the loweſt callings and condition of life, would have been thought, either in their own, or the opinion of others, fit accomplices towards the execution of ſo great and very difficult an undertaking.

Any impoſture, projected with an intention of impoſing a new and falſe religion on the world, requires much art and management, and is fit only to be conducted by men of parts and ſubtle heads, who know the world, and have perhaps in ſome degree render'd themſelves popular or conſiderable in it: And the fewer thoſe perſons are, who act in concert upon ſuch a project, to which I may add, the ſooner it is brought to bear, the leſs danger there will be to them either of a diſcovery, or a diſapointment.

But where a continued courſe, if I may ſo ſpeak, of impoſture is to be enter'd into, for the ſpace of a thouſand or fifteen hundred years, and to be carry'd on by a promiſcuous ſucceſſion of plain, illiterate, and poor men, with perſons of ſuperior diſtinction, whether for their learning or quality, their popularity or power: This is ſuch a ſcheme, as no wiſe man would ever have originally projected, or afterwards attempted to execute; and which it is impoſſible, that weak men could have executed for any time, without being every where detected and expos'd.

Tho' we grant then, it does not clearly prove the truth of a divine revelation, that the ſeveral parts of it are reported in a conſiſtent and uniform manner; becauſe it is not neceſſary that men who are carrying on an impoſture, ſhould for that reaſon contradict themſelves; yet we cannot but think a juſt ſeries and connection of truths deliver'd from time to time, by men, who profeſs'd themſelves to be divinely inſpir'd, and who cannot be ſuppos'd ſucceſſively to have combin'd or engag'd in a deſign of deceiving the world; we cannot, I ſay, but look upon ſuch a ſeries and connexion of truths to be a ſtrong evidence, that thoſe perſons really ſpake, as they profeſs'd, by divine inſpiration; and eſpecially when the ſeveral parts of the revelation, reported by them, mutually give light and confirmation to each other, and to the whole.

6. When what is ſaid to be a divine revelation contains ſuch doctrines, as it was moſt worthy of God to reveal, and which could not be certainly known without his revealing them.

It muſt be acknowledg'd, that there are ſeveral doctrines, which it is highly neceſſary, as we have already obſerv'd, for men to know, which yet, in their natural ſtate, they could not poſſibly come to the knowledge of. I have inſtanc'd in ſeveral of thoſe doctrines, and there are a great many more, that divine revelation can only diſcover and clearly aſcertain to us; which tho' not ſo directly influential on our lives, as thoſe before-mention'd, yet may be improv'd to give us more juſt notions of the power, wiſdom, and goodneſs of God, and in their natural tendency to make us more thankful and obedient to him.

Of this nature are ſuch truths, as may diſcover to us the original and formation of all things; the ſtate of innocence, wherein man was at firſt created; the occaſion and manner of his falling from that happy ſtate; and the methods of reſtoring him to the favour of God, and even to a capacity of a much greater happineſs, than that from which he fell.

If it be ſaid, theſe are doctrines which a man may form in his own mind, whether they have or have not any real foundation in fact; and that it is not therefore neceſſary, we ſhould believe them to be matter of divine revelation; I anſwer, that I do not here ſo much intend, as if ſuch doctrines were ſeparately in themſelves conſider'd, an argument of their being divinely reveal'd, as that ſuppoſing a divine revelation ſhould be made, theſe doctrines are, what we may conclude, if really true, God would reveal; and therefore are no inconſiderable proof of the truth and divine authority of ſuch a revelation, in concurrence with other internal proofs, which we are able to produce for it.

Yet this may be ſaid for a direct proof to be drawn from ſuch doctrines, as to the point in queſtion; that except in that book, which we believe to be written by divine inſpiration, or in other writings, which have borrow'd from it, what light the authors of them had in theſe matters, the doctrines here ſpecify'd, are no where conſiſtently treated of, or even ſeparately in any clear and diſtinct manner.

THIS conſideration appears then to be ſomething more than barely a circumſtantial proof that ſuch doctrines are in truth divinely reveal'd; for what good reaſon can be aſſign'd, why no other author in the world, neceſſary as they are to be known, ſhould have given any reaſonable account of them, but only the authors of that very book, which, we ſay, was written by divine inſpiration.

7. WHEN thoſe, who report a divine revelation, diſcover their probity and love for truth, by impartially recording their own faults, and thoſe of their friends.

A man is naturally favourable to himſelf, in the judgment he makes, whether of his internal qualifications, or his conduct. But one who would impoſe a falſe religion on the world, is concern'd to diſtinguiſh himſelf in both reſpects, particularly in the latter, as much as he can. For which reaſon impoſtors have generally pretended to a great auſterity of life, and ſanctity of manners; that their names might not only give the more credit and authority to the ſeveral doctrines they taught when living, but be tranſmitted with their doctrines to future ages, with advantage and honour.

WHEN a perſon therefore, who would eſtabliſh a new religion upon the authority, as he declares, of a divine revelation, omits no proper opportunity of recording his own * failings and miſcarriages, in publiſhing that revelation; when he paſſes over in ſilence his own perſonal † qualities or ‡ atchievements, which are moſt ſignal and praiſe-worthy, and opens the account of his miniſtry with the relation of a ** fact, not to be juſtify'd or excus'd, but upon a preſumption of his having acted by a divine authority; which yet he takes not care to inform the world, that he really did act by in that particular inſtance: When, again, throughout the whole current of his hiſtory, he never ſpeaks any thing to his own advantage, but upon ſome juſt and neceſſary occaſion, where the honour of God is concern'd; while he ſometimes mentions things, without the leaſt viſible neceſſity, to his diſadvantage, or when there appears no motive, upon which he ſhould be induc'd to do it, but the pure love and regard which he has for truth: All theſe conſiderations muſt be allow'd as ſo many reaſonable and moral evidences of his veracity.

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* *Exod.* 4. 10, 13. *Numb.* 11. 10, 11, *&c.* Ch. 20. 12. † *Heb.* 11. 25. *Acts* 7. 22.

‡ *Joſephus* relates, that *Moſes* obtain'd a ſignal victory over the *Æthiopians*, and in a war, if we may believe an authority cited by *Euſebius*, wherein he was General for ten years. *Præp. Evang. l.* 9. *c.* 27.

** *Exod.* 2. 12.

We are too much inclin'd to be partial in judging and ſpeaking of our ſelves, eſpecially on occaſions, where we apprehend our reputation to be nearly affected: But a concern for the honour of our country in general, or that particular tribe, or family, from which we are deſcended, is alſo very apt to biaſs our judgment, both concerning perſons and facts, ſeverally relating to them.

It may therefore be juſtly conſider'd, as a farther argument of the integrity of any writer, when inſtead of extolling the greatneſs or virtues of thoſe people, for whoſe ſake he principally writes, and whoſe intereſts he has moſt at heart, they are told, that it is not either * for *their number or goodneſs*, that God has eminently diſtinguiſh'd himſelf in their favour; but becauſe from a free determination of his own goodneſs, he was pleas'd to *ſet his love upon them*.

When, again, upon all occaſions, even of recording their moſt important and illuſtrious actions, he makes it his endeavour to leſſen the ſhare they had in the conduct or execution of them, by aſcribing them wholly in both reſpects to the over-ruling power and wiſdom of a beneficent or merciful God. When their continual murmurings and ingratitude, their incredulity and frequent relapſes into idolatry are not forgotten, but mention'd with all the heightning circumſtances, that could in truth or juſtice have been mention'd by an open declar'd enemy. In a word, when with reſpect to the very † head of that tribe from which he deſcends, and from whom it is denominated, he does not forbear to mention, or ſeek to palliate one of the moſt black and diſhonourable actions recorded in all his writings.

The whole force of what has been here obſerv'd, lies in this following propoſition; that we have a very ſtrong and reaſonable preſumption concerning the fidelity of any perſon, in whatever he relates, when he ſpares neither himſelf, his country, nor his family, in relating things, which if it had not been for a conſcious endeavour in him to preſerve the character of a faithful hiſtorian, he might without any obſtruction to his great and principal deſign, have eaſily conceal'd from the knowledge of the world.

8. The laſt internal proof I ſhall mention of a true and divine revelation, is from the prophecies contain'd in it, as to certain things very ſpeedily to receive their accompliſhment. I do not here ſpeak of any prophecy as it is to receive its accompliſhment, but purely as a prediction, without conſidering, as yet, whether it will be accompliſh'd or not.

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* *Deut*. 7. 7, 8. † *Exod*. 6. 16, 25, 26. *Gen*. 34. 30. Ch. 49. 6.

Supposing, for inſtance, a teacher who comes, as he profeſſes, in the name of God, to reveal any doctrine to the world, ſhould foretell, that three days after his death and burial, he ſhall be reſtor'd to life again; allowing ſuch a teacher to have the common uſe of reaſon and underſtanding, the only motive he can have for aſſerting that ſuch a fact is to happen, muſt be the aſſurance he has from ſome divine authority, that it certainly will happen: For otherways all the pains he has been at, and all the methods he has before taken to gain credit to his miſſion, muſt in a very little time not only be render'd ineffectual to the end he deſign'd, but expoſe his name, even among thoſe, with whom he immediately convers'd, to unavoidable infamy and contempt.

The caſe is different, where a teacher, who pretends a divine commiſſion, tells his diſciples, that he ſhall certainly riſe again from the dead, but not till a thouſand years after his death: For tho' it is a ſufficient argument of his being an impoſtor, that when thoſe thouſand years are expir'd, he does not really return, as he promis'd, to life again; yet his religion having, by that time, taken deep root, and being eſtabliſh'd far and wide in the world, under the ſanction and authority of the civil powers; means may be much eaſier found out (as in fact we know, they have been by the *Mahometans*) to ſalve the credit of ſuch a prophet, by putting ſome other ſenſe, how forc'd or unreaſonable ſo ever, on his prophecy, than that, which the natural conſtruction of it imports; and wherein it was originally, and to that time, all along underſtood.

Yet I do not ſay, that the prediction of any ſupernatural event, which we are told will immediately happen, is in itſelf abſtractedly an argument, that the perſon by whom it is divulg'd, has a divine authority for it, or for his exerciſing the office of a prophet in general; but only where there is no exception to his character, with reſpect to his underſtanding or prudence: And when upon all occaſions, in the diſcharge of his miniſtry, he acts ſuitably to the tenor of it, and *ſpeaks forth the words of ſoberneſs and truth.* Where any perſon indeed, who pretends to propheſy in the name of God, appears to be diſturb'd in the operations of his mind, or to be ſtrongly acted by a ſpirit of enthuſiaſm, I readily allow this conſideration to be of no force at all. But then to prevent our being impos'd upon by any ſuch enthuſiaſt, there are certain ſymptoms, whereby we may with a little attention eaſily know and detect him.

Enthusiasm, tho' it frequently proceeds from the illuſions of the devil, yet has many times, perhaps, no other origin or cauſe, than a certain courſe of the ſpirits in the brain, too rapid and violent for the underſtanding to moderate the force of; and whereby the imagination is ſometimes heated to a degree, that is attended with very extraordinary and ſurprizing effects. This diſorder in the brain may naturally be accounted for, as other bodily or feaveriſh diſtempers are, from a certain diſpoſition in the air proper to produce them, and to ſpread the malignity or contagion of them: And therefore we are not to wonder if on certain occaſions men of character, both for their learning and piety, are ſometimes infected with a ſpirit of enthuſiaſm, according to this mechanical account of it, in ſuch a manner, that they are eaſily capable of communicating the infection, which they have imbib'd, to others. This may be one method of accounting for the origin of *Montaniſm*, and why *Tertullian* in particular, who had one of the moſt warm and ſtrong imaginations in the world, was more readily diſpos'd to embrace that hereſy. The caprice and diſtortions of the Quakers, at their firſt appearance, with their prophecies, and thoſe of the *Camiſars*, or other modern viſionaries, if reſolv'd into theſe principles, leave the greateſt room for our making a more charitable judgment ſeverally of them: And ſince the ſtrength of their common diſtemper, like that, proceeding from any other malignant or contagious cauſe, is obſerv'd gradually to wear off, we may piouſly hope, that they will all of them grow daily more and more capable of a cure, till, by the bleſſing of God, their recovery at laſt be fully perfected.

These are the internal proofs of a divine revelation, which I have thought proper to mention; and they have every one of them, ſeparately conſider'd, ſome force towards the end, for which they have been produc'd: But all of them together afford us ſuch a ſtrong moral evidence, that the revelation wherein they are found, and to which they are peculiar, is really from God, as may be juſtly thought ſufficient to perſuade our belief of it; even tho' we were not able to produce, what I am in the next place to conſider, the external, and ſtill more inconteſtable proofs of it.

Chap.

Chap. IV.

Of the external proofs of a divine revelation.

THE internal proofs of a divine revelation carry in them a very high degree of probability; but to remove all poſſible obſtacles to the conviction of unbelievers, God has ſtill afforded us other authentick means of proving it, which cannot be deny'd, or reaſonably diſputed: Among theſe, we uſually,

I. In the firſt place, conſider miracles; by which I mean certain extraordinary and ſurprizing facts, above any known or conceivable power of natural cauſes to produce, or perhaps even contrary to the ſtated courſe and operations of them. As ſuch facts can only be done by the power of God, or by ſubordinate agents acting in virtue of it, which is the ſame thing to our purpoſe, ſo it cannot be ſuppos'd, that God ever has, or ever will employ them towards confirming a falſe teſtimony or doctrine. For this would be, if I may ſo ſpeak, to ſet the broad ſeal of heaven to a lye, and to give it the moſt inconteſtable ſanction, which it ſeems poſſible for the divine power to give any truth.

Upon this ſuppoſition, that God may confirm a falſe teſtimony or doctrine by a power truly miraculous, we can never be aſſur'd, on any occaſion, that the doctrine atteſted by ſuch a power, if not in the nature of it ſelf-evident, is really true; and conſequently God could have no wiſe or reaſonable end in revealing any truths, or confirming them by miracles to mankind, except ſuch truths only as are evidently deducible from the principles of natural reaſon: So that miracles, were this notion once admitted, could never be a means of perſuaſion; ſeeing no account can be given, why a power which has at any time been employ'd to credit an impoſture, may not be repeated, in variety of inſtances, to the ſame end. The arguments why this cannot be done, muſt be taken from the goodneſs, the holineſs, or veracity of God; but the force of theſe arguments being deſtroy'd in one caſe, wherein God is ſuppos'd to act contrary to the eternal perfections of his nature, there can be no arguing with any certainty from them in other caſes.

To this it may perhaps be reply'd, that the miracles work'd by the magicians of *Ægypt*, had all the appearance of true miracles; if by a miracle we underſtand a production of ſome effect or other, above the power of natural cauſes to produce. For by what mechanical or ſtated laws of motion can we diſcover how a rod caſt upon the ground ſhould be turn'd into a ſerpent; or how rivers of water through a country of large extent ſhould be chang'd into rivers of blood; or, laſtly, how frogs ſhould be brought up in every part of ſuch a country to cover it at once? By what methods ſoever theſe things were effected, natural cauſes, ſo far as we know any thing of their powers, could not effect them. And yet they were done directly in oppoſition to a divine teſtimony. Which ſeems quite to overthrow, what has been ſaid, that no ſubordinate being or agent can be empower'd to do any thing above the known or conceivable power of natural cauſes, in confirmation of a falſhood.

To this we anſwer, that tho' the ſcriptures do attribute what was done by the magicians to magical arts and enchantments, and the author of the book of wiſdom expreſſly calls them, *the illuſions of art magick*; it muſt, however, be acknowledg'd, they had at the firſt view the ſame viſible ſignatures of true miracles, with thoſe, that were done by *Moſes* himſelf. The great difference between them appears to have conſiſted in this; that the miracles of *Moſes* were done immediately, and with greater facility; theirs, by the intervention of certain charms or incantations; which yet had no direct or perceivable tendency to produce them. This ſuperior power in *Moſes*, when there was a plain and open conteſt before *Pharaoh* and all his people, whether he were really commiſſion'd by the true God, was an evident proof that the teſtimony of that prophet carry'd in it a force and authority ſuperior to any teſtimony, which the magicians were capable of bringing againſt it. But the evidence whereof there was ſtill leſs reaſon to ſuſpect; when the power of *Moſes* to do, what the *Ægyptians* could not do, either in the ſame or the like manner, oblig'd them openly to confeſs, *this is the finger of God*, or the effect of God's more ſpecial interpoſition, and of his acting with a higher hand.

But ſtill had not *Moſes* been preſent to over-rule the magicians by an aſcendant of power, both with reſpect to the manner, and ſubject matter of his miracles, 'tis highly credible that whatever they could have done by virtue of any magical or diabolical arts, yet God would not have ſuffer'd them in oppoſition to the truth, to have done ſuch things, which had at leaſt ſo much the appearance of true miracles, that there ſcarce ſeems to have been otherways any certain method, whereby it was poſſible for thoſe, before whom they were done, to avoid the illuſion of them.

A miracle then, except perhaps in this particular caſe, where the providence of God is concern'd to prevent the reception of a falſe doctrine, by exerting, at the ſame time, ſome greater power in oppoſition to it, is ever to be conſider'd as giving a certain and undeniable ſanction to the truth of any doctrine atteſted by it.

BUT here it is farther objected, that all true miracles being the immediate effects of a ſupernatural power, they are all produc'd by a power equally ſuperior to that of natural cauſes; and therefore the evidence of one of them, towards confirming any doctrine, cannot be greater or leſs, than that of another.

THIS is a notion which has been commonly advanc'd; but without any ſolid or ſufficient grounds to ſupport it: For tho' all natural cauſes are equally incapable of effecting any thing wholly ſupernatural, it does not therefore follow but there may be degrees of more or leſs force in a ſupernatural power, both with reſpect to the more ready and eaſy manner of operating any miracle, and to the number of miraculous effects produc'd by ſuch a power.

ANOTHER argument againſt our inferring with certainty the truth of any doctrine from the miracles ſaid to be done in confirmation of it, is founded upon a conceſſion, which believers themſelves are oblig'd to make, namely, that we do not know all the powers or poſſible combinations of matter and motion. From whence unbelievers would infer, that ſuch miracles, as they are call'd, were in truth nothing elſe, but the reſult of a neceſſary, tho' ſecret concourſe of natural cauſes, known only by ſome method or other to the perſon, who improv'd that opportunity with the unthinking multitude, of declaring himſelf a prophet ſent from God, and empower'd by him to do thoſe things, which no man could have done, if God had not been with him.

I have urg'd this argument of the deiſts againſt the evidence of miracles, with all the force and advantage I could give it. But the very foundation of it being falſe, nothing that is certain or ſolid can be ſuperſtructed upon it.

IT is irrational to ſay, we do not know all things, to which the powers of matter and motion extend; therefore we cannot know any thing to which they do not extend. To diſcover how abſurd and inconcluſive this way of arguing is, let us apply it in another inſtance. Every man, who is in the leaſt acquainted with the mathematicks, diſcovers certain diſtinct powers and relations of a circle; but becauſe no man knows all the powers or relations of a circle, can it therefore be inferr'd, that for any thing we know a circle may have all the properties of a ſquare, or a triangle? The argument will hold as well in this caſe, as againſt the evidence of miracles: For tho' we do not know in every reſpect how far the power of matter may reach, as to things which fall within the proper compaſs of it; yet we certainly know there are things without the compaſs of it, which a change in the courſe of nature, that ſuppoſes a power ſuperior to all natural cauſes, can only effect.

This way of arguing has been made uſe of to prove, that matter, under certain modifications, may be capable of thought; but if matter, however modify'd, may for this reaſon think, that we do not know all the powers of it, then the minuteſt particle of matter, in what poſition ſoever, ſuppoſe in the heart of a ſtone or an ingot, may alſo think, becauſe we no more know all the powers of the leaſt atom, than of any other ſyſtem of material beings whatever. There is evidently in all caſes a wide difference between our not knowing all the powers, which any being may really have, and our knowing what powers it cannot, in the nature of the thing, poſſibly have.

But ſhould we grant, that certain unknown combinations of matter or motion may poſſibly produce ſuch events as we term miraculous; yet by what means ſhall any perſon know, when thoſe combinations will really and punctually happen. Suppoſe, for inſtance, that at the time when *Jeſus Chriſt* appear'd in the world, there was ſuch a ſecret order and diſpoſition of natural cauſes, that exactly at ſuch a moment, ſuch a particular perſon in ſuch a part or city of *Judæa*, ſhould be cur'd of his lameneſs, have his eyes open'd, tho' born blind, or be reſtor'd to life after he had lien for a conſiderable time in the grave; yet the knowledge of all theſe circumſtances, and of ſo many cauſes concurring to produce, in the ſpace of three years, a greater number of extraordinary events, than had ever before happen'd in the world, appears to have been of itſelf no leſs miraculous and divine, than we believe the power, by which thoſe cures were really effected: At leaſt if any evil ſpirit could poſſibly have known the critical time when theſe things would of courſe happen, or have communicated the knowledge of it to any perſon, diſpos'd to take ſo peculiar an advantage of carrying on an impoſture, we may piouſly believe, that God would have interpos'd by ſome ſpecial providence to prevent the effects of ſo very dangerous an illuſion, as it muſt in all human probability have been attended with.

But I argue here upon a wrong conceſſion; what I would directly infer from the premiſes, is, that wherever we ſee the effects of a ſupernatural power in order to confirm the truth of any teſtimony or doctrine, we are to believe them true: Provided God, in oppoſition to ſuch a power, do not at the ſame time viſibly exert a ſuperior power, either as to the manner of the thing done, or in a greater variety of inſtances.

Yet there have been ſome pious and learned men of opinion, that a falſe prophet may be permitted to work a true miracle, even where it is not immediately oppos'd by a ſuperior power, in caſe the contrary doctrine to what it is brought to eſtabliſh, has been already eſtabliſh'd by any former miracle. This opinion is principally grounded on two texts of ſcripture: I ſhall firſt cite that out of the Old Teſtament. *If there ariſe among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a ſign or a wonder, and the ſign or the wonder come to paſs whereof he ſpake unto thee, ſaying, Let us go after other gods (which thou haſt not known) and let us ſerve them: Thou ſhalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your ſoul*[*]. “Whereby it is plain, ſays a learned author[†], that after a true doctrine is confirm'd by divine miracles, God may give the devil or falſe prophets power to work, if not real miracles, yet ſuch as men cannot judge by the things themſelves whether they be real or no; and this God may do for the trial of men's faith, whether they will forſake the true doctrine confirm'd by greater miracles, for the ſake of ſuch doctrines as are contrary thereto, and are confirm'd by falſe prophets, by ſigns and wonders.

From which explication of the words, it appears to have been the judgment of this great man, that falſe prophets may for certain wiſe and good ends of providence, be permitted to work true miracles, or at leaſt ſuch wonders as cannot be diſtinguiſh'd from the effects of a power truly miraculous; which, as to all the grounds of perſuaſion, is the ſame thing; it being of equal force to induce the belief of any perſon, whether a power whereby ſome extraordinary fact is done to that end, be really ſupernatural, or ſuch, as 'tis impoſſible for him to know, upon the beſt enquiry he can make, not to be ſupernatural.

But this is a conceſſion, which, with all deference to the author, I humbly preſume to be of ill conſequence; and to ſuppoſe ſuch a dangerous trial of men's faith, eſpecially at any great diſtance from the time a doctrine has been once eſtabliſh'd by a miraculous power, as may be too apt to make them queſtion the motives upon which they formerly believ'd. Whatever men, who have accuſtom'd themſelves to a juſt and ſtrict way of arguing, may judge, yet it will be hard to convince the generality of men, that the original proofs of thoſe miracles, which are ſaid to have been done by *Moſes*, or by *Jeſus Chriſt*, are of greater force or evidence towards confirming the doctrines ſeverally taught by them, than a true miracle, now work'd before their eyes, would be towards confirming any new doctrine; eſpecially if it ſhould import no repugnancy to the natural and eternal reaſon of things.

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[*] *Deut.* 13. 1, 2, 3.

[†] Stillingf. orig. ſacr. p. 236.

Besides, there is no neceſſity from the words of *Moſes* to make this conceſſion: For they do not, in the literal ſenſe of them, imply, that a falſe prophet may be empower'd *to work, if not real miracles, yet ſuch as men cannot judge by the things themſelves, whether they be real or no*; but only that he may have a power of giving ſuch a ſign or a wonder, as will come to paſs: Whereby tho' ignorant or unthinking people, who do not enquire into the true nature or reaſon of things, may be more eaſily impos'd upon; yet there could be no ſuch danger of illuſion to thoſe, who are capable of examining how, and by what proper character, a ſign or a wonder may be really diſtinguiſh'd from any fact truly miraculous. The anſwer to that other text cited out of the New Teſtament is very obvious; *Chriſt* tells his diſciples, that a time will come, when *there ſhall ariſe falſe Chriſts, and falſe prophets, and ſhall ſhew great ſigns and wonders, inſomuch that, if it were poſſible, they ſhall deceive the very elect* *. Now there is ſtill leſs appearance of reaſon for our underſtanding theſe ſigns and wonders as true miracles, than thoſe mention'd in the former text. When it is ſaid, they would be of ſuch a nature, as to deceive, if poſſible, the very elect, the words even explain'd in the moſt natural and proper ſenſe, ſeem to imply, that ſuch ſigns and wonders would not be in truth miracles, but only ſo in outward ſhew and appearance; tho' ſo artfully manag'd, that it might be ſometimes difficult, but never impoſſible to truly pious and good men to detect the impoſture. This explication of the words appears ſtill more juſt and natural, when we conſider, ſuch like diabolical arts, to ſeduce mankind, are expreſſly call'd by the apoſtle, *lying wonders* †; and when we are aſſur'd by the ſame authority, that God, to puniſh the ſins and impieties of men, *becauſe they receiv'd not the love of the truth that they might be ſav'd, ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhould believe a lye* ‡.

There is but one material objection more, that occurs to my thoughts againſt the evidence of miracles to prove the truth of a divine revelation, and that is taken from the miracles ſaid to have been done at ſeveral times by mere heathens and infidels. But admitting any of thoſe miracles, or all of them, to have been really done by a power wholly ſupernatural, how will it follow from hence, that true miracles cannot be evidential of any divine teſtimony or doctrine? Seeing the miracles attributed to heathens, were not done in confirmation of the heathen idolatry or ſuperſtition, nor, ſtrictly ſpeaking, on any religious, but only on a providential account; except perhaps that they were permitted by God to awaken a corrupt world into a more lively ſenſe both of his providence, and his exiſtence, and of the ſeveral duties reſulting from a firm belief of them.

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* *Mat.* 24. 24. † 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 9. ‡ ✝. 10, 11.

SHOULD every thing then, which *Philoſtratus* or *Hierocles* report of *Apollonius Thyanæus* be really true; ſhould the ſurprizing effects of his *Taleſmans* mention'd by other authors have really happen'd, and could they not be accounted for upon any natural or mechanical principles; ſhould we grant farther, that *Veſpaſian* really effected the cures aſcrib'd to him by *Tacitus*; and that a woman, as *Spartianus* tells us, was cur'd of her blindneſs by kiſſing the knees of the Emperor *Adrian*; yet as no doctrine of religion was deſign'd to be confirm'd by any of theſe miracles, ſuppoſing them really ſo, no concluſion can be drawn from them in prejudice of miracles done, and expreſſly at the time declar'd to be done, in confirmation of ſome reveal'd doctrine. It is not therefore a queſtion of any great importance towards our proving the truth of a divine revelation, whether thoſe ſeveral facts were true or falſe; or if true, whether they were effected by a power truly miraculous. And yet as to the cures reported to be done by *Veſpaſian*, upon which the greateſt force of the objection, I am conſidering, has been put by unbelievers, there appears ſome cauſe to ſuſpect the truth of them, from the very reaſon, which *Tacitus* aſſigns why they were done. For he tells us many miracles happen'd at that time *, to the end *Veſpaſian* might be more eminently diſtinguiſh'd by particular marks of the divine favour. A complement ſo much the more ſpecious and well-tim'd, as it contributed to render a prophecy concerning a King's coming out of *Judæa*, which was then commonly talk'd of, more applicable to that prince; he being the firſt who was proclaim'd Emperor in *Judæa*; and accordingly that prophecy was actually apply'd to him by *Joſephus*, who with ſo many fine and excellent talents of an hiſtorian, was not ignorant, on a proper occaſion, how to make his court.

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* *Per eos menſes multa miracula evenere, queis cœleſtis favor, & quædam in Veſpaſianum inclinatio numinum oſtenderetur.*

But what, after all, were the mighty cures done by *Veſpaſian?* A † mean and obſcure perſon was cur'd by him of his blindneſs, and a woman of a lame hand: And tho' *Tacitus* ſays, the former, and more conſiderable of theſe cures *, was atteſted by thoſe, who had no intereſt in telling a lye; yet it will be hard to prove, that ſo great a prince, in order to ſerve the ends of his glory or ambition, could not find means of cauſing a fact to be repreſented otherways than it really happen'd; or that there might not have been perſons about him ready enough to make ſuch a repreſentation of their own accord. Thoſe, who know the arts, which are ſometimes thought neceſſary to be practis'd in the courts of princes, will not ſuppoſe they were altogether impracticable in the court of a prince at the head of the *Roman* Empire. Nothing can be more juſt, than what is obſerv'd by *Dupleſſis Mornay* on this occaſion. "How eaſy was it for ſo many legions, ſo many artful paraſites, ſo many perſons, attach'd to the intereſts and fortune of the Empire, to ſupport the credit of a ſtory, how ſmall a foundation ſoever it had in fact.

But there is no neceſſity, after all, as was intimated before, that we ſhould queſtion the truth of a fact, however miraculous, which was not intended to eſtabliſh a doctrine of religion, in order to ſhew, that true miracles, when done to that end, are proper and undeniable proofs of any doctrine or revelation atteſted by them.

II. Another external proof of a divine revelation, is the accompliſhment of what has been foretold concerning events, which had no perceivable connexion with the ſtate or ſituation of affairs, at the time of their being foretold. A faculty of diſcovering things, which do not depend on any certain, or ſo much as any probable cauſe in the natural order of things, to produce them, muſt be no leſs miraculous and divine, than a power of altering or ſuſpending the courſe of nature: Nay, prophecy ſeems in this reſpect to have the advantage above miracles themſelves, towards perſuading our aſſent; that whereas there may be ſome difficulty in diſtinguiſhing between true and pretended miracles, or on which ſide, granting them to be true miracles, a ſuperiority of power may lie; yet every man is capable of judging concerning a plain and obvious fact; or whether it really happen at the time and after the manner expreſſly foretold. Let us ſuppoſe, for inſtance, that many hundred years before a perſon was born, the ſeveral circumſtances, which were moſt extraordinary, not only of his birth, but of his life and death, were punctually deſcrib'd; every one may eaſily know, by comparing the event, on all theſe accounts, or on any of them, with the deſcription, whether they really agree, and in what reſpects; and if the agreement between them be clear and perfect, there is all the evidence, which can be deſir'd, that ſuch a prediction was in truth from God; it being in the natural reaſon of the thing his diſtinguiſhing and peculiar prerogative, had we no revelation to aſſure us of it, to *declare things for to come; and to ſhew the things that are to come hereafter* *.

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† *Ex Plebe.*

* *Quod teſtantur, quibus nullum mendacio pretium.*

This impoſſibility to all created beings of knowing things to come, reſpects ſuch things, as either depend on the motions of material beings, or the free determination of intelligent beings.

1. It is impoſſible, in the firſt place, that any creature ſhould know all future motions of material beings, or the ſeveral events reſulting from them. For tho' God has eſtabliſh'd certain general and uniform laws of motion, according to which the greater organical parts of the world regularly perform their proper functions; and tho' we are certain in many caſes, that cauſes acting in ſuch a manner will produce ſuch effects; yet as God has reſerv'd to himſelf a power of varying, of directing, or ſuſpending the action of ſecond cauſes, and it is not for his creatures to know the times and the ſeaſons of his ſpecial interpoſition to theſe ends, which he has put in his own power; they are for that reaſon incapable of knowing with certainty, eſpecially at any conſiderable diſtance, even what events will happen, from the ordinary courſe of material agents in this world. Were it otherways, we could never be able to prove the truth of a divine revelation from the accompliſhment of any prophecy concerning events, which purely depend on the action of material beings: And an objection againſt the validity of ſuch a proof, would be unanſwerable to thoſe, who believe God has ſo fix'd the order of natural cauſes, that except upon occaſion of his working a miracle, he never interpoſes by any immediate and particular will in the government of them. Upon this hypotheſis, a prophecy concerning a famine or a flood, of fruitful or temperate ſeaſons, could never be, what they are repreſented to be in the holy ſcriptures, arguments of a divine prophetick ſpirit. For as they are ſuppos'd to depend on a chain of cauſes, how ſecret ſoever, yet purely mechanical, and abſolutely neceſſary, how ſhall we be aſſur'd that evil ſpirits may not diſcover the connexion of them; and if they may, that they cannot find means of communicating their diſcovery to men? Who might take that occaſion of impoſing upon others, under a pretence of being acted and commiſſion'd by a prophetick ſpirit. It may therefore be in-

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* *Iſaiah* 41. 22, 23.

cidentally conſider'd as an argument, why God acts in the government of the world by particular wills; that had this principle no true foundation, it would be extremely difficult, if not impoſſible, to prevent the illuſions of evil ſpirits, on occaſion of a power, which might, for any thing we know, naturally belong to them, of prophecy, or divination; even concerning events, very remote; and the cauſes whereof, at the time of their being foretold, could not, to human appearance, have any certain or probable connexion with them.

2. We have ſtill a ſtronger evidence of a divine revelation from prophecy, when the thing foretold is accompliſh'd, by the operation indeed of material beings, but after a manner whereof they are in themſelves incapable, and which neceſſarily ſuppoſes them acted upon by a ſuperior power. To give us a better idea of the force of this argument upon a compariſon with the former, let it be granted, that ſome inviſible being had reveal'd to a prophet ſeveral ages ſince, that in the eighteenth century from the birth of *Chriſt*, in the month of *March*, on ſuch a day of the month, and in the evening of that day, one of the moſt ſurprizing luminous appearances ſhould happen in the heavens, that the world had ever ſeen; tho' it may be queſtion'd whether the prediction of ſuch an appearance, ought not to have had the evidence allow'd to it of a divine prophetick ſpirit; ſeeing the moſt learned aſtronomers have not been able, in any ſatisfactory manner, to account for it, even after it has happen'd, and they have made the niceſt obſervations, human ingeny or art could make upon it; yet ſtill unbelievers, in their way of arguing from the bare poſſibility of things, may object, it does not follow from hence, that there are not other beings capable of ſeeing much farther upon the chain of natural cauſes, than the moſt knowing of mankind can ſee; and who might with as much certainty have diſcover'd in that view, the time when this phænomenon would happen, as any man can foretell a future eclipſe of the ſun or moon. But ſhould it, on the other hand, be foretold, that ſuch a perſon, in ſuch an age, ſhall after his being put to death, and lying three days in the grave, be reſtor'd to life again; here is the prediction of a fact, whereof the prophet was ſo far from diſcovering any viſible cauſe in the natural order of things, that no poſſible cauſe, but that only of a divine ſupernatural power, could be aſſign'd for it. Upon this conſideration, the ſaying of *Tertullian*, I believe, becauſe the object of my belief is impoſſible, for which he has been ſo often inſulted by atheiſtical men, is capable of being explain'd in a very good and reaſonable ſenſe: Seeing the greater impoſſibility there appears to human apprehenſion of effecting what has been foretold,

told, the ſtronger and more convincing muſt the evidence neceſſarily be, that ſuch a prediction, when accompliſh'd, was really from God.

3. We have yet a farther evidence of any divine revelation from prophecy, when the things foretold depend, as to the event, on the free determination of intelligent beings. Whatever men may pretend concerning the neceſſary connexion of all natural cauſes and effects, or from the ſecret powers of matter and motion, to ſolve the arguments we bring from prophecy, either in reference to miraculous or more common events; yet ſuppoſing the freedom of human will, without which there is an end of all religion and morality at once, no poſſible account can be given how ſuch actions as flow entirely from the free exerciſe of it, can be certainly foretold, unleſs by that all perfect being, who *underſtandeth our thoughts afar off, and knoweth the things, that come into our mind, every one of them.* By means of which perfect knowledge, and which is peculiar to him, he can, without deſtroying human liberty, infallibly foretell what uſe men will make of it, or which way, when left to themſelves, and ſo far he may juſtly leave them, they will certainly take.

Should it then be foretold, that an extraordinary perſon, not only with reſpect to the circumſtances of his birth, the manner of his life, and the miracles to be done by him, ſhould appear in ſuch an age, but that at laſt he ſhould be betray'd and put to death by the hands of wicked men, betray'd in particular by one who *had eat of his bread, and drank of his cup*; here is all the evidence from prophecy, and ſuch is the evidence we have for the truth of chriſtianity, that any revelation can have, or be ſuppos'd capable of.

But it is objected againſt the arguments we bring from the accompliſhment of prophecies, in proof of any divine revelation, that they are often expreſs'd in obſcure terms, and are often too for that reaſon differently interpreted and apply'd. To this, I anſwer,

1. That the obſcurity of ſome prophecies is no argument againſt the evidence of thoſe, which are full and clear. We have reaſon, on the other hand, to conclude from the accompliſhment of ſuch, as have been clearly and fully expreſs'd, that the obſcurity of others does not ariſe ſo much from the manner of expreſſing them, conſider'd originally, or ſimply in itſelf, as from the diſtance of time, which renders it many times ſo difficult for us, to know the proper ſignification wherein certain terms have been formerly us'd, or the cuſtoms, to which they allude. Where prophecies are really in their own nature obſcure, and deſign'd, for reaſons

I ſhall afterwards mention, to be ſo; yet when the time of their being accompliſh'd is at hand, we ſhall then, in all probability, ſee and diſcover the accompliſhment of them in as clear a light, as that wherein the accompliſhment of other prophecies, in the ſame inſpir'd writings, has already appear'd to us. For as ſome prophecies may be obſcure on the account of idioms or ancient cuſtoms, the meaning whereof is now leſs certain; ſo other prophecies may refer to idioms or cuſtoms, which thoſe future ages, wherein they are to be fulfill'd, will give origin to. The prophecies, for inſtance, in the *Revelations*, which relate to the ſeven churches, were both ſufficiently clear in themſelves, and have been ſince remarkably accompliſh'd. We may from hence conclude, that other prophecies in this book, tho' ſo obſcure, that learned men are ſometimes at a loſs to form even ſpecious conjectures about the ſenſe of them, yet have not only the ſame divine authority with the reſt; but that when the ſtate of things, at the time they are to receive their completion, and to which they allude, comes to be known, the evidence of their being fulfill'd will be equally ſtrong and convincing. But,

2. There is ſometimes a moral neceſſity, why prophecies ſhould be obſcure, to the end, that they may be more ſafely convey'd down to poſterity; lay leſs reſtraint on the liberty of human will; and be more free, as to the methods of accompliſhing them, from all ſuſpicion of artifice or deſign. Firſt, the conveyance of a prophecy would be in ſome caſes extremely difficult, if not wholly impracticable, if the perſons, affected by it, could not poſſibly miſtake the ſenſe or meaning of it. Suppoſe, for example, it were expreſſly foretold by ſome prophet, that a nation, to which alone this oracle is committed, ſhall, after a certain term of years, for their perverſeneſs and impiety, their ingratitude and rebellion, be utterly deſtroy'd, and become a name of reproach to all the nations about them; it is reaſonable to believe, that inſtead of preſerving ſuch a prophecy, and tranſmitting it down to future times in any certain or authentick manner, ſuch a nation would uſe means to ſtifle the tradition of it, at leaſt would not admit it among their moſt publick and ſacred records; by which the credit and authority of it would by degrees be ſenſibly impair'd, if not at length wholly deſtroy'd.

If ſome prophecies were not obſcure, they would, in the next place, bear too hard upon the liberty of human will, eſpecially as to the perſons deſign'd to be the immediate inſtruments of executing them. Good men would be more backward to engage in any meaſures, that muſt neceſſarily terminate in their own death or ruin; and wicked men animated with a ſpirit of pride, ambition,

tion, or enthuſiaſm, might be apt to think they had leſs to anſwer for, in rendring themſelves, by any means, neceſſary towards effecting the great ends of providence, and without which *the determinate counſel and foreknowledge of God*, would of neceſſity be fruſtrated.

Again, the obſcurity of certain prophecies tends to render the methods of accompliſhing them more free from all ſuſpicion of artifice or deſign. For had they been ſo clear that no queſtion could ariſe concerning the ſenſe of them, it would have been ſuppos'd, that thoſe who were concern'd in executing them, deſignedly form'd the rules of their conduct, according to that ſenſe; and that they were not therefore foretold, becauſe it was certainly foreſeen they would be accompliſh'd; but men, on the other hand, made it their endeavour, or conſpir'd to accompliſh them, becauſe they were foretold.

But when a prophecy is fulfill'd, without any knowledge of the perſon, or contrivance of the perſons, by whom it was to be fulfill'd; this affords us a proper occaſion at once of admiring the certainty of God's foreknowledge in declaring it; and the wiſdom of his conduct in bringing it to paſs.

As to that part of the objection, which relates to the different ſenſes, according to which prophecies are ſometimes interpreted or apply'd, it may be accounted for upon the reaſons, we have already aſſign'd, why certain prophecies are, and ought to be, originally more obſcure. But if it be ſaid farther, there are few prophecies, the ſenſe whereof is ſo clear, that no interpreters have divided upon it; this remark if true, yet does not affect the truth or evidence of ſuch prophecies; becauſe it may be juſtly reſolv'd, to ſay nothing concerning the ignorance of ſome interpreters, into motives of vanity or prejudice, of envy or intereſt. Learned men, who are generally agree'd in condemning theſe motives, and ſometimes preſcribe very good rules againſt them, do notwithſtanding in their writings too plainly appear to be ſometimes influenc'd by them. Above all, an ambition of making new diſcoveries, and of being thought capable of ſaying ſomething upon any thing, is one fruitful cauſe why the plaineſt texts, by the artifices of ingenious men, eſpecially of new theoriſts, are on occaſion made to ſpeak, what of all things is moſt foreign to their proper and genuine ſignification. But I do not think it neceſſary to ſay any thing more in anſwer to an argument, which concludes nothing, but that man is too apt to be biaſs'd in his ſearch after truth, by ſuch conſiderations, as either obſtruct the diſcovery of it, or will incline him, when diſcover'd, to diſſemble it.

III. We have a farther evidence of a divine revelation, when the conduct of the perſons, to whom God originally made it, was ſuch, that no motive, but a full and clear conviction of its truth, could be ſuppos'd to have carry'd them through all the difficulties of their miniſtry.

It has been conſider'd before, as an internal proof of a divine revelation, when the doctrines propos'd, or the duties requir'd by it, are contrary to the general maxims or intereſts of this world. But when, notwithſtanding the greateſt diſcouragements imaginable in both theſe reſpects, men not only aſſent to the truth of ſuch a revelation themſelves, but induſtriouſly report it, and declare the neceſſity of believing it to others; here is all the ſecurity that can be deſir'd of their acting at once upon a ſincere diſintereſted principle, and from the moſt convincing motives. For what elſe ſhould induce reaſonable beings, either to believe or propagate any doctrine, at the hazard of every thing that is dear and valuable to them in this life.

This argument for the truth of a divine revelation, from the viſible dangers it expoſes men to, and their ſuffering in their neareſt intereſts actually for it, ſuppoſing them perſons of common underſtanding, does not only reſpect thoſe, to whom ſuch a revelation is immediately made, and who are authoriz'd by God to report or declare it to others, but the perſons alſo who are induc'd to believe it, and to comply with the ſevereſt conditions of it, upon their authority: Eſpecially at a time when the original proofs and teſtimonies, upon which the credibility of it depends, may be eaſily come at, and examin'd into. For men are ſo naturally averſe to embrace any overtures to their diſadvantage, but above all ſuch overtures as they know beforehand muſt neceſſarily terminate in the greateſt miſeries here incident to them; that nothing but the cleareſt evidence of thoſe proofs and teſtimonies could, upon any reaſonable preſumption, have been effectually convincing to them.

We find in other caſes, worldly conſiderations have ſo great a power towards blinding the minds and corrupting the hearts of men, that *ſeeing they often ſee, and will not perceive, and hearing they often hear, and will not underſtand.* When they are therefore plainly told, as the condition of their embracing ſuch a religion, that they muſt prepare to take up the croſs, and deny themſelves even as to things lawful and innocent; that they muſt be willing to part with houſes and lands, and wifes and children, and life itſelf; that they ſhall be perſecuted, revil'd, and hated; and that if in this life only they have hope, they are of all men moſt miſerable: In a word, when the greateſt encouragement here given them, is, that tho' their enemies are able to kill the body, yet they cannot kill the ſoul; when it is thus previouſly condition'd, what men are to expect and do if they will believe a divine revelation, nothing but the ſtrongeſt aſſurance of its truth and divinity, can be imagin'd capable of perſuading their belief. Intereſt, which, according to a common obſervation, never lyes, is always cautious, eſpecially on occaſions, which very nearly concern it, of being impos'd upon by a lye.

It is of no force to invalidate this argument, that there have been certain enthuſiaſts, the Quakers in particular, very forward to ſuffer in defence of errors, for which they pretended a divine inſpiration. For, not to reſume what has been ſaid concerning the proper marks, whereby an enthuſiaſt may be diſtinguiſh'd from a perſon truly inſpir'd, I am here principally conſidering the motives, upon which men may be induc'd to believe a divine revelation, not from the internal light of it, for which even pious and well meaning perſons may ſometimes perhaps miſtake the illuſions of a diſtemper'd or over-heated imagination; but I have reſpect to ſuch motives of belief as depend upon facts, that all perſons may appeal to, or have recourſe to the ſenſible proofs of; and from which they may draw certain and undeniable concluſions.

The ſum of the preſent argument lies herein, that men naturally avoid ſo much as they can, the occaſions of certain pain or ſuffering, and will therefore in all caſes think themſelves concern'd to enquire what it is they ſuffer for, and upon what grounds. A man eſpecially, who prefers an immediate, tho' cruel and ignominious death, when conditions of life are propos'd to him, ſo he will but renounce the principle for which he is condemn'd to die; if ſuch a principle be not deduc'd in a ſpeculative way of reaſoning, wherein very good men may be miſtaken, but from the evidence of certain and obvious facts; ſuch a man muſt in all reaſon be ſuppos'd thoroughly convinc'd, and upon the moſt clear and inconteſtable proofs, that thoſe facts were truly done. To which I ſhall only add, that the argument under conſideration, holds ſtill ſtronger, when great numbers of people, of both ſexes, of all capacities, and of every age and condition, indifferently agree in bearing teſtimony for the ſame truths, at the ſame hazard of every thing, which they can be ſuppos'd to have moſt at heart in this preſent world.

IV. The laſt external evidence I ſhall bring in proof of a divine revelation, ſhall be taken from the ſucceſs of the doctrine or doctrines affirm'd to be reveal'd. Not that I think ſucceſs does neceſſarily infer the truth of every profeſſion, or the juſtice of every cauſe; it is often, on the other hand, made uſe of by occaſion of the ſenſible pomp and luſtre, wherewith it is attended, rather to dazle and amuſe, than convince the minds of men: By which means, the countenance, it gives to error and corruption at once, is too notorious.

When the ſucceſs then of any religion is either owing to ſuch cauſes, as were proper in the natural tendency of the thing to produce it; or is ſupported by ſuch methods, as are moſt apt to pervert the judgment, and corrupt the hearts of men: When, for example, the doctrines of ſuch a religion are not only moſt agreeable to the motions of concupiſcence, and the maxims upon which men ordinarily act in this world, but force is alſo us'd to compel them to come into the ſcheme and external profeſſion of ſuch a religion: When the ſame conſiderations, upon which they were originally induc'd to embrace it, are ſtill continued to preſerve and ſupport it: Succeſs is ſo far from being an argument, that a religion, introduc'd and ſettled after ſuch a manner, is really true, or divinely reveal'd, that we have ſtrong grounds to ſuſpect, it is wholly owing to human contrivance, if not to diabolical illuſion.

But when, on the other ſide, a religion is eſtabliſh'd, contrary to the ſettled laws and powers of the world, to the ſtrongeſt prejudices and paſſions of men, and all the ſtanding maxims of worldly prudence; when, in order to this eſtabliſhment, no force is employ'd but that of ſimple and naked truth, by the miniſtry of perſons of no reputation for their birth, or condition of life; for any acquir'd learning or abilities; and who do not appear to be naturally of an enterprizing genius, nor fit, by reaſon of their mean and ſervile occupations, to cultivate or improve it: There being no way, in this caſe, of accounting either for any reaſonable expectations ſuch men could have of ſucceeding in the diſcharge of their miniſtry, or for the ſucceſs of it afterwards; to what can we impute their undertaking it, but to a ſpecial divine commiſſion; or their ſurmounting all the difficulties, which occurr'd to them by the way, but to his ſpecial aſſiſtance and benediction, who *giveth power to the faint, and to them who have no might encreaſeth ſtrength* *; or, in other words no leſs expreſſive of the immediate power and direction of God, who *makes things that are not*, or which do not appear to have any natural efficiency towards that end, *to bring to nought things that are* †.

To conclude this argument, one would as ſoon have thought, that twelve weak and unarm'd men of *Judæa*, might have entirely ſubdu'd the *Roman* legions in the time of our Saviour, and reſtor'd their country, then reduc'd under the form of a *Roman* province, to its priſtine freedom; as that twelve poor and illiterate perſons, if God had not been with them, could have been able, by preaching a religion every where evil ſpoken of and oppos'd, to convert ſo great a number of infidels to the faith of it, in almoſt all parts of the known world, and even in ſuch of them as were moſt barbarous, and incapable of inſtruction. *This was viſibly the Lord's doing!* and might perhaps, tho' it appear'd to be done in ſome meaſure by human means, yet have been more properly number'd among the evidences of a divine revelation taken from facts truly miraculous; if perhaps this method of eſtabliſhing a religion were not to be conſider'd, as being in the extenſive, and powerful effects of it, the greateſt miracle of all.

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* *Iſaiah* 40. 29. † 1 *Cor.* 1. 28.

CHAP. V. PROP. IV.

That God has in fact made a revelation of his will.

I Shall not here ſpeak concerning any revelation previous to the time of *Moſes*, which the revelation made to that prophet confirms the truth of: I ſhall only ſhew, that ſuppoſing we had no particular ſtanding record to aſſure us that *Moſes* was a true prophet; yet we have ſuch ſtrong moral aſſurances from other authentick monuments of antiquity, and from general tradition, of his being a perſon who acted by a divine authority, as are ſufficient, in the reaſon of the thing, to induce our belief of this article.

THAT there was ſuch a perſon as *Moſes*, is atteſted by many of the heathen writers, who ſpeak of him as an extraordinary man, and the founder of the jewiſh laws and religion. It is no leſs evident, that ſeveral converts from among the heathens openly embrac'd this religion, and ſubmitted wholly, or in part, to the laws of it. Some of them became proſelytes of righteouſneſs, and oblig'd themſelves to obſerve all the precepts of the law. Others were only proſelytes of the gate, obliging themſelves to obſerve the precepts given to *Noah*, and the ten commandments, the ſubſtance whereof thoſe precepts contain'd; and they were ſo call'd, becauſe it was allow'd them to ſojourn, and live among the *Jews*, or *within their gates*. Theſe proſelytes muſt be ſuppos'd to have had an opportunity of examining the proofs of that religion, they became converts to, and for which they were willing to forſake the religion of their fathers. And 'tis not reaſonable to believe they could all of them ſo eaſily have overcome the prejudices of education in order to embrace a religion ſo directly oppoſite to them, if they had not been, upon examination, fully convinc'd of its divine authority; for upon that foundation the whole jewiſh œconomy was originally form'd, and all along ſubſiſted.

When the law of *Moſes* was deliver'd, he plainly ſhew'd the credentials of his miſſion, by working ſeveral miracles to confirm it. The affairs of the *Jews* were in ſuch a ſituation at the time of this prophet's appearance, that they and all the nations about them might ſee, the hand of God was in every thing he undertook and effected. Now we ought not to believe, in regard to the wiſdom, goodneſs, and veracity of God, that *Moſes* would have been permitted to give ſuch ſtrong and viſible proofs of his acting by a divine power, had he really been an impoſtor. For by this means, not only the *Jews*, but the nations, had been under the moſt powerful moral inducements to believe a lye; and to chuſe not their own deluſions, but ſuch as it was impoſſible for them, in any human way of judging, to detect: Seeing there can be no greater motive of credibility, that a revelation comes from God, than when a perſon who declares himſelf commiſſion'd by a divine authority to report it, does confeſſedly do thoſe things, which no man could do, if God were not with him.

The method, in particular, of conducting the people of *Iſrael* out of *Ægypt*, was in the whole progreſs of it, no leſs than in the execution at laſt, miraculous. For nothing but a continued ſeries of miracles at once in the nature of them, moſt ſurprizing, and in their effects moſt dreadful, could have prevail'd with *Pharaoh*, to let the people of *Iſrael* go; and when, after his frequent colluſions, he conſented at length to diſmiſs them, yet in order to cut them off, he immediately forms a deſign of purſuing them, but in the purſuit, is miraculouſly overthrown and deſtroy'd in the red ſea, with all his hoſt.

The victories afterwards gain'd by the *Iſraelites* over the nations, in their way to the promis'd land, (and from which it viſibly appear'd that their God was the Lord, and fought their battels) at once confirm'd the truth of the *Moſaick* revelation, and gave thoſe people an opportunity of knowing him to be the true God; ſeeing *no other God could deliver*, or give ſucceſs, *after that ſort.* This method of ratifying *Moſes* his miſſion, and the laws promulg'd by him, was very agreeable to the wiſdom of God, and his deſign in revealing them. For 'tis impious to ſuppoſe, that providence would, in the ſight of the heathen, have favour'd *Iſrael* with ſuch miraculous ſucceſſes, under the conduct of a leader, who only pretended to act, and make laws by an authority, which he was not really inveſted with.

THESE and other teſtimonies which we alledge from matters of fact, concerning the jewiſh religion, are not only recorded in ſcripture, but occaſionally mention'd by diſintereſted, and ſometimes by prejudiced writers; whoſe fidelity, as to this point, we have therefore leſs reaſon to ſuſpect. And tho' it very much tends, as I ſhall ſhew afterwards, to facilitate the proofs of a divine revelation, that it ſhould be committed to a ſtanding, and divinely inſpir'd writing; yet that ſuch a method is not, in the nature of the thing, abſolutely neceſſary to prove a revelation divine, appears from hence, that God may afford us ſuch other moral evidences concerning the truth of a reveal'd religion, as may be ſufficient to induce and oblige our aſſent to it: Otherways there would be an end of all hiſtorical evidence, and the common faith of mankind at once. And it had been impoſſible for the *Jews* before the time of *Moſes*, to have produc'd any ſolid proof of the revelation made to *Abraham*, or the antediluvian patriarchs; and even after the time of *Moſes*, concerning the *Moſaick* dipenſation, till the book of the law was found in the reign of *Joſiah*, among the ruins of the temple; ſuppoſing, as ſome have done, that all the copies of it were then loſt, but which poſſibly at leaſt might have been loſt. Neither, upon this ſuppoſition, could the firſt chriſtians have been convinc'd of thoſe ſeveral facts, upon which the reaſonableneſs of their believing the chriſtian revelation depended, in the ordinary way of preaching, till the ſcriptures were actually committed to writing.

BUT to confine my ſelf at preſent to the facts related in the hiſtory of the *Jews*; and the evidence of the *Moſaick* revelation founded upon them; they are not only mention'd by their own authors, who have a right at leaſt to the common faith of hiſtorians; but they are alſo mention'd by heathen authors, who yet out of envy or hatred to that nation, ſometimes give a wrong and malicious conſtruction of them. If ſome writers among the heathens have omitted to mention the affairs of the *Jews*, even when they appear to have come properly in their way, it is becauſe they were acted by the ſame ungenerous motives, and induſtriouſly deſign'd that omiſſion. Their ſilence, in particular, concerning this people in the hiſtory of *Alexander the Great*, which afforded ſo fair and conſiderable an occaſion of mentioning them, is juſtly obſerv'd by * *Joſephus* to have proceeded, not from ignorance, but deſign.

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* Contr. App. l. 1.

What I would here obſerve, is, that thoſe ancient writers, who mention the *Jews*, whether in their favour, or to their diſadvantage, had opportunities of enquiring into the truth of ſuch facts, as they alledg'd, or to which they appeal'd in proof of their religion: And if theſe facts had not been true, their enemies would, and might eaſily have found means of diſproving them, which yet none of them was ever able to do. In ſhort, if there had been any juſt cauſe of ſuſpicion, that the *Jews* falſify'd in what they reported for the honour of their religion, and their lawgiver was in reality an impoſtor, can we think that the nations who hated that people, and ſometimes had them in ſubjection, would not by one means or other have detected their falſe and groundleſs pretences to a divine ſanction of their laws; or that themſelves, in their frequent apoſtaſies and revolts, would not have thought it for their intereſt, and in order to the greater peace and ſatisfaction of their minds to enquire, whether thoſe laws were really given by *Moſes*, as a prophet commiſſion'd by God to that end? And yet tho' an evil heart of unbelief towards God ſo ſtrangely diſcover'd itſelf in them, while they were fed by him with continual miracles, they never entertain'd or expreſs'd any doubt concerning the divine authority of their religion in general; which it is not credible they would have ſo inviolably maintain'd, particularly under any grievous ſervitude or calamity, if the divine miſſion and authority of *Moſes* had not been confirm'd to them in the beſt atteſted, and moſt authentick manner poſſible.

We may add in confirmation of the divine authority of the jewiſh law, that a common-wealth was eſtabliſh'd upon it. If it was eſtabliſh'd immediately by *Moſes* when the facts, which declar'd his divine miſſion, were really done, or while they were freſh in the memory of men, the truth of the *Moſaick* revelation is hereby granted. But if this eſtabliſhment were made afterwards, and only pretended to to be made in the time of *Moſes*, and by authority of certain miraculous works attributed to him, but which were not really done by him, all the *Jews*, to a man, in the age when ſuch a pretence was advanc'd, would have been able to detect the falſhood and vanity of it. And tho' ſome of them, in honour of their nation, might perhaps have ſuffer'd themſelves to be impos'd upon by it, yet it was impoſſible that ſo groſs an impoſition could have obtain'd univerſally among them; or, if it could, that the nations themſelves in their neighbourhood would not have diſcover'd and expos'd the vanity of it.

The proofs concerning the divine miſſion of *Jeſus Chriſt*, in order to reveal the will of God to mankind, are ſtill, if poſſible, more clear and evident. He appear'd at a time, as a prophet ſent from God, when there was a general expectation, that ſome extraordinary perſon was to come with that character; and the credentials he produc'd of it were ſo fully and openly atteſted, that there could not be any juſt or reaſonable grounds for ſuſpecting them. His doctrine was not preach'd, nor the miracles he work'd to confirm it, done clandeſtinely, or in a corner, but publickly before much people, ſeveral of whom were his profeſs'd enemies, who induſtriouſly ſought all occaſions againſt him, and had he been a deceiver of the people, would without queſtion have eaſily found means of detecting him. But the mighty works which he did, and whereby the truth of his miſſion was evidenc'd, were ſo well and generally known, that both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, tho' for reaſons which affected their paſſions and intereſts they did not embrace his religion, yet could not but acknowledge them as effects of a ſupernatural power; the *Jews* attributing them, inconſiſtently with the very nature and deſign of his doctrine, to diabolical arts; and the heathens conſidering them as extraordinary, and truly miraculous facts, without drawing the natural conſequences from them. Tho' there were ſome indeed of both diſtinctions, on whom they had their proper and intended effect.

THAT the heathens in particular, for the *Jews* are out of the queſtion as to this point, could not be ignorant of the miracles done by our Lord, we need produce no other arguments to evince, than from the apologies of the firſt chriſtians, who appeal'd to them as facts ſo well known, that the evidence of them could not be conteſted; if it had been conteſtable, the adverſaries of the chriſtian religion neither wanted learning or wit, malice or power, to invalidate and overthrow it.

SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

Book II.
Of divine Revelation, and the holy Scriptures.

Part II.
Of the holy Scriptures.

Chap. I.
That the revelation which God has made of his will to mankind, is contain'd in the writings of the Old and New Teſtament.

IT appears from the laſt propoſition, which I charg'd my ſelf with the proof of in the former part, that if neither the jewiſh nor the chriſtian religion had been committed to a ſtanding writing, yet we ſhould not have wanted a ſufficient moral evidence, that in fact a divine revelation has been made to mankind.

GOD, notwithſtanding, out of his great goodneſs to prevent thoſe doubts and uncertainties, which are apt to attend the conveyance of an oral tradition, how well ſoever atteſted, has been pleas'd to record the revelation which he made to mankind in the writings of the Old and New Teſtament. The benefit of that revelation being deſign'd to extend to mankind in general, it was expedient that it ſhould be tranſmitted ſucceſſively down to poſterity, in ſuch a manner, as might be of moſt general uſe, and ſubſerviency to this end. In order to which, conſidering the common weakneſs and ignorance, the paſſions and prejudices of men, an unwritten traditionary account could not have been ſo proper, as a known and publick record, which, if any miſtakes concerning the doctrines reveal'd ſhould happen, they might by appealing to it, be better diſcover'd, and more eaſily rectify'd.

WHAT I have therefore incumbent on me at preſent, is to enquire concerning the truth of thoſe writings, which compoſe the books of the Old and New Teſtament; and upon what grounds we believe they were really written by divine inſpiration?

Now the proof of this depends principally upon the ſame external teſtimonies, whereby we prove the truth of divine revelation in general. For if thoſe, who were commiſſion'd by God to promulge that revelation to the world, were not, for the ſame reaſon, to be ſuppos'd faithful in repeating it, whether by word or writing, the end, which God propos'd in making it, would not be neceſſarily obtain'd: Nay, ſuch prophets, under the pretence of a prophetick ſpirit, when they ſhould not be really acted by it, might be the occaſion of miſleading men into very groſs and dangerous errors.

BUT does it then follow, that a prophet ſent from God, and whoſe miſſion is fully atteſted, muſt in every thing he ſays or writes be directed by a divine and infallible ſpirit? We ſay he muſt, with reſpect to every thing he ſays or writes, whilſt he ſuſtains the character of a prophet; the wiſdom and goodneſs of God requiring, that a perſon commiſſion'd by him to declare his will, ſhould, in order to effect the end for which he is ſo commiſſion'd, be reſtrain'd at leaſt from advancing what is falſe, by any method whatever: Except in ſuch caſes, where, if he propheſy falſe, God affords proper means of detecting him. As in the caſe of thoſe prophets[*], whereby *Ahab* was, notwithſtanding, ſeduc'd; or where the ſame prophet immediately undeceives thoſe, he had before ſpoken to in a manner liable to a wrong conſtruction; as in the caſe of *Michaiah*[†]: Or, laſtly, where a prophet only ſpeaks his private ſentiments, at the ſame time, declaring them to be ſo; as in the caſe * of St. *Paul.* For it can be no manner of prejudice to the truth of thoſe doctrines, which are deliver'd by divine inſpiration, when the perſon who was inſpir'd is particularly careful to inform us, where he ſpeaks not in his extraordinary or prophetical, but in a private capacity.

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[*] 1 *Kings* 22. 6, 7.

[†] ℣. 15, 16, 17, 18.

It will be allow'd, except in theſe particular caſes, that what a prophet, duly authoriz'd, ſpeaks, is to be conſider'd not as *the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God.* The reaſon of this divine aſſiſtance which accompanies a prophet in whatever he preaches, holds equally good to prove him divinely aſſiſted in whatever he writes. Upon one conſideration indeed, the reaſon holds ſtronger in the latter reſpect, as what is committed to writing naturally carries more weight and authority, and ordinarily ſpreads wider, than what is only reported as having been ſpoken; and ſo may be the occaſion in every age, if the writing be not authentick, of miſleading a greater number of perſons.

Neither is it any objection to what is here ſaid, that the inſpir'd writers often argue from the common principles, and according to the common methods of human reaſoning. For tho' we need no other argument to oblige our aſſent to any doctrine, but that it comes from God, yet men are more eaſily perſuaded to believe ſuch truths, which we have firſt demonſtrated to them the reaſonableneſs of believing; eſpecially if we have done it after a manner beſt accommodated to their prejudices, or moſt agreeable to their capacities; which was the method uſed by our Saviour in all his parables, and by St. *Paul* in his epiſtles; who therefore told the *Romans, he ſpake after the manner of men, becauſe of the infirmity of their fleſh* †.

Yet admitting there have been ſeveral perſons, who from time to time wrote by divine inſpiration; this conceſſion may ſtill be thought of no great force towards proving the ſeveral books of the Old and New Teſtament divinely inſpir'd; except we can ſhew, that thoſe books were ſeverally written by the perſons, whoſe names they bear.

Now we have the ſame moral evidence, and moral evidence is all that the nature of the thing in queſtion will admit, towards aſcertaining the books of the Old and New Teſtament to their reſpective authors, as we have towards proving, that other books compos'd in any former age, were written by ſuch particular authors. Nay, as to the writings of *Moſes*, the moſt ancient in the world, we have ſtronger evidence of his being the author of them, from the teſtimony of heathen writers, and the foundation of a common-wealth, the remains whereof ſtill viſibly ſubſiſt, tho' diſpers'd thro' the ſeveral parts of the world, than we have that any other writing of antiquity, was really the author's to whom it is now attributed.

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* 1 *Cor.* 7. 12. 2 *Cor.* 11. 17.

† *Rom.* 6. 19.

BESIDES, the *Jews* for ſo many ages, under all the revolutions and calamities that befel them, ever continued unanimous in this point: And even after the diviſion of the ten tribes, tho' they differ'd, as to the divine authority of the prophetical writings, whereby the apoſtaſy of thoſe tribes was ſo expreſſly condemn'd; yet they all along agreed in acknowledging the divine authority of the *Pentateuch*.

AND indeed it was provided by many ſpecial acts of the divine wiſdom, that authentick copies of the books of *Moſes* ſhould be inviolably preſerv'd: Such of them, I mean, as related more particularly to the jewiſh ſtate and diſpenſation. The people were not only commanded in general, to *teach them their children, ſpeaking of them, when they ſat in their houſes, and when they walk'd by the way; when they lay down, and when they roſe up; and to write them upon the door-poſts of their houſes, and upon their gates* *; but it was alſo given expreſſly in charge, that the King, who was *to ſit upon the throne of Iſrael, ſhould write him a copy of the law in a book* †, and make it, as ever he might hope for the bleſſing of God upon his government, the ſtanding rule and inſtrument of it.

THE *Jews* have a tradition, that the law, by the appointment of *Moſes*, was to be read thrice every week in their publick aſſemblies; which tradition, conſidering how ſtrictly both prince and people were commanded to read and ſtudy the law, ſeems to have ſome reaſonable foundation at leaſt in the probability of the thing. *Grotius* is of the ſame opinion, and whether it were true or falſe, the ſcripture however plainly informs us, that *Moſes of old time had, in every city, them that preach'd him, being read in the ſynagogues every ſabbath day.*

THAT which tended to preſerve the copies of the law more authentick, and the original of it ſtill more inviolable, (if, as ſome learned men have thought, it was preſerv'd under the hand-writing of *Moſes* till the return of the *Jews* from *Babylon*) was another expreſs command, that, ‡ *at the end of every ſeven years, in the ſolemnity of the year of releaſe, in the feaſt of tabernacles, when all Iſrael was to come to appear before the Lord their God, in the place he ſhould chooſe, then ſhould this law be read before all Iſrael, in*

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* *Deut.* 11. 18, 19, 20. † *Deut.* 17. 18, 19, 20. ‡ *Deut.* 31. 10, 11, 12.

their hearing. Here is an enumeration of ſuch ſtrong and weighty circumſtances, in order to prevent any falſifications of the law, by obliging the attention of the *Jews* when it was read in ſo publick and ſolemn a manner, that it is not eaſy to conceive, either how it could have been falſify'd, or, what I have principally under conſideration at preſent, attributed to any other author, than to him, by whom it was originally written, and all along ſuppos'd to be written, but the fraud muſt of neceſſity have been in as publick a manner detected.

THE rules laid down in the law of *Moſes* for the trial of prophecy, diſcover alſo the great care, which the providence of God was pleas'd to take, leſt the *Jews* ſhould be impos'd upon by any falſe pretenders to a divine prophetick ſpirit, or miſtake in attributing ſuch writings, as were dictated by a true ſpirit of prophecy, to any other name, than that of the true author.

FOR tho' it was not neceſſary that they, who compos'd under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the hiſtorical books of the ſcripture, ſhould have their names ſeverally affix'd to thoſe books; the uſe and credit of hiſtory not depending ſo much on our perſonal knowledge of the hiſtorian, as on the truth of thoſe facts, which he relates, and wherein, if he falſify, he may be diſprov'd by other authentick memorials, or concurrent teſtimonies; yet the authority of any prophecy depending entirely on the divine miſſion of that prophet, by whom it is deliver'd: It is of greater neceſſity, his name ſhould be particularly recorded; to the end that what he foretold might, as to the event, be more certainly rely'd on: Eſpecially if he had already prov'd his miſſion, by the accompliſhment of any former prophecy.

IF the *Samaritans* did not acknowledge the prophetical writings, as having the ſame ſanction, in reſpect to their divine authority, with the books of *Moſes*; their error, or rather their obſtinacy, herein, proceeded too viſibly from conſiderations merely political; which, on other occaſions, have had power enough, not only to corrupt the judgment of particular perſons, but of whole communities. It is evident, that ſo long as the authority of the prophetical writings was admitted, the apoſtaſy and corrupt worſhip of the ten tribes were ſo plainly condemn'd, that nothing could be pretended, with the leaſt ſhew of reaſon, in favour or excuſe of them.

IF ſome difficulties concerning the authority of other inſpir'd writings have riſen, becauſe the names of their reſpective authors are not aſcertain'd to them; yet this can be no prejudice to the authority of ſuch books, the names of whoſe authors are ſeverally ſpecify'd before or in them. Neither indeed is it of abſolute neceſſity

ceſſity towards our diſcovering any perſon to be the author of a book compos'd by him, that he ſhould either prefix his name to it, or be mention'd in the body of it; provided it be known and reported by perſons of undoubted veracity, that he was the author of it. For certain human and prudential conſiderations may even oblige a perſon divinely inſpir'd, for ſome time at leaſt, to conceal his name. As on occaſion of the epiſtle written by St. *Paul* to the *Hebrews*, it was expedient they ſhould not have known him to be the author of it, becauſe of the prejudices they had conceiv'd againſt him, as being, in their opinion, an apoſtate, and an enemy to their nation. For I need not obſerve how much a perſonal prejudice is apt to biaſs our judgment againſt the cleareſt, and ſtrongeſt reaſoning of any author, and to fruſtrate the good effects, which might otherways be expected from it.

I need not deſcend particularly to examine the divine authority of thoſe books, which compoſe the canon of the Old Teſtament, whether anonymous, or tranſmitted to us under any certain name. 'Tis ſufficient to ſhew in general, that our Saviour approv'd the canon of the Old Teſtament, as it was receiv'd by the *Jews* in his time. As to the writings of *Moſes* and the prophets, this admits of no diſpute; with reſpect to other writings acknowledg'd as canonical by them, the expreſs command of our Saviour, that they ſhould *ſearch the ſcriptures*, ſuppoſes that what they then receiv'd and believ'd as ſuch, had all the authority, which the ſcriptures, properly ſo call'd, ought to have. For if they had at that time receiv'd any book, as having the ſanction of divine authority, which really had no ſuch ſanction, inſtead of expoſing a moſt dangerous error, which, with reverence we may ſay, it became a prophet ſent from God (ſhould we conſider our Saviour only as an ordinary prophet) to have done, he had, on the other hand, taken too viſible and direct a method towards confirming them in it. And tho' what we call an argument *ad hominem* may ſometimes be uſed on occaſion of a ſpeculative error, and without applying our ſelves directly to confute it; yet to direct the practice of men, as our Saviour here does, in conſequence of any error, is what no rules, either of reaſon or piety, will admit on any occaſion.

So again, when the apoſtle tells us, that *unto the Jews were committed the oracles of God*[*]: Here was a proper, and, in appearance, unavoidable opportunity to a perſon animated with his zeal (had the *Jews* really falſify'd ſo high and ſacred a truſt; or impos'd any human compoſition, as of equal authority with thoſe oracles,

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[*] *Rom.* 3. 2.

oracles) to have expos'd a corruption moſt abominable in its own nature, and of the moſt dangerous conſequence to religion.

But that the canon of the *Jews* was approv'd by the Spirit of God in the New Teſtament, appears more expreſſly from the ſame apoſtle, when he tells *Timothy*, that *from a child he had known the holy ſcriptures* *. By which he could mean no other writings, but thoſe, which were then publickly receiv'd and acknowledg'd by the *Jews*, under that title. For he adds in the next words, *all ſcripture is given by inſpiration from God* †: Which, according to a ſtrict and juſt method of reaſoning, particularly obſervable in the writings of St. *Paul*, plainly implies, that the ſcriptures, which *Timothy* had learn'd, were in truth given by divine inſpiration, whether they bore the names of their ſeveral authors or not.

But it had been ſufficient to my preſent purpoſe to obſerve, that the revelation God has made of his will is in part contain'd in the writings of the Old Teſtament, from the confirmation given to the divine authority of *Moſes*, and ſeveral of the prophets, who are cited out of thoſe writings, and ſometimes by name, in the New Teſtament.

As to the authors of thoſe books, which compoſe the chriſtian canon, the proofs of their being written by the perſons, under whoſe names they have been tranſmitted to us, are as evident as the nature of the thing will admit. *Julian* the apoſtate himſelf acknowledges, that the authors of the ſeveral goſpels, were the perſons to whom they are ſeverally attributed. The evidence indeed, that both the goſpels and epiſtles were written by thoſe, whoſe names they bore, was ſo full and inconteſtable, that the adverſaries of chriſtianity, in their writings againſt the chriſtians, and in their diſputes with them, make no diſpute upon this head. But take the thing for granted. *Celſus* ‡, in particular, objects to the chriſtians, that alterations had been made in the goſpels. But this rather ſuppoſes, that, in his opinion, they were written by the evangeliſts, to whom they are aſcrib'd. For had he believ'd them aſcrib'd to wrong names, he would not have objected, that they had been alter'd, but that they were ſuppoſitious: This being a conſideration of greater force to deſtroy the credit and authority of them.

The caution, which was us'd by the firſt chriſtians, in admitting any books into the canon of the holy ſcriptures, whoſe authors were not certainly known to them, appears from the ſcruples they

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* 2 *Tim.* 3. 15. † ℣. 16. ‡ Orig. cont. Celſ. l. 2.

had for ſome time concerning the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, the ſecond epiſtle of St. *Peter*, and the general epiſtle of St. *Jude*. But their receiving theſe books into the canon afterwards, is the greater argument of the care they took in diſtinguiſhing genuine from apocryphal and ſpurious writings; ſeeing they did not admit even books, which were truly canonical as ſuch, till upon ſtrict examination and enquiry, they evidently appear'd to be ſo.

The hereticks themſelves did not deny the books of the New Teſtament to have been written by thoſe, under whoſe names the church ſeverally receiv'd them; but pretend oral tradition, in oppoſition to the doctrines contain'd in them: The vanity of which pretence *Irenæus*[*] expoſes, by ſhewing, that there were not only clear teſtimonies concerning the truth of the catholick faith from undoubted tradition, which might be trac'd up to the times of the apoſtles, but that the very ſame goſpel, which they firſt preach'd, they afterwards committed to writing, to be the foundation and pillar of faith.

The concluſion I would draw from what has been here ſaid, is, that we have all the evidence towards aſcertaining the books of the New Teſtament to their proper authors, that we can have towards proving any book written at or about the ſame diſtance of time by any particular author. And yet we no more doubt, whether certain writings, that go under the name of *Cicero*, or *Seneca*, were really compos'd by them, than whether there have ever been two ſuch perſons in the world. Nay, we have, on ſome accounts, a ſtronger evidence on the part of the ſacred penmen, than we are able to produce for the genuine works of theſe, or any other human authors whatever in former times. I have obſerv'd, that the adverſaries of chriſtianity have found themſelves oblig'd to aſcribe the evangelical writings to thoſe perſons, to whom they have been ſeverally aſcrib'd by the church; who, if thoſe books had been impos'd upon the world under falſe names, yet could eaſily have diſcover'd and expos'd ſuch an impoſition. But, in truth, it no leſs concern'd the primitive chriſtians themſelves to prevent their being impos'd upon in an affair, which ſo viſibly affected them in their neareſt intereſts. As they were beſt able to judge of the books attributed to the evangelical writers, eſpecially if what *Tertullian*[†] reports be true, and there is no reaſon to ſuſpect the truth of it, that in his time there were original manuſcripts of the apoſtles ſtill preſerv'd; ſo they could not but apprehend it as a matter of the laſt conſequence to the credit of the chriſtian religion, to make a right judgment concerning them.

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[*] Iren. l. 3. c. 3. l. 3. c. 1.

[†] Adverſ. Hæret.

It cannot be imagin'd, that perſons, who were willing to ſuffer every thing for the truth of chriſtianity, would not be careful to preſerve, in every reſpect, thoſe monuments uncorrupt, whereby the facts, upon which the proofs of it depended, and the doctrines it contain'd, might be beſt atteſted, and tranſmitted to future ages. And ſince the reaſons, in particular, of aſcertaining any other books to their reſpective authors, could not, to appearance, be ſo ſtrong in point of intereſt, as thoſe, which influenc'd the firſt chriſtians, the evidence, upon which they aſcrib'd the writings of the New Teſtament to the evangeliſts and apoſtles, muſt therefore be allow'd ſo much the ſtronger and more convincing.

In order to prove the truth and authority of the holy ſcriptures, I might have deſcended to an induction of the ſeveral proofs, both internal and external, before mention'd, to this end. But as in mentioning thoſe proofs, I had plainly an eye to the purity, harmony, and other perfections of the holy ſcriptures, and to the facts and doctrines contain'd in them, 'tis eaſy for every one to diſcover the force of what was ſaid, by a particular application under this article. To avoid prolixity, I have ſatisfy'd my ſelf in general with ſuch conſiderations and external proofs, as may ſufficiently evidence to all reaſonable and well diſpoſed perſons, the divine authority of the ſacred penmen, both in reference to the Old and New Teſtament, and the truth of thoſe writings, which have been ſucceſſively convey'd down to us, under their reſpective names.

I ſhall only take notice, before I conclude this head, of an objection propos'd by Mr. *Hobbes* (but which, as to the main deſign of it, is ſince his time become more popular) that may be thought to lie againſt what I have here particularly ſaid concerning the genuine writings of the apoſtles. It has been pretended by this author *, that the writings of the apoſtles were not receiv'd or acknowledg'd by the church, as ſuch, till the council of *Laodicea*, which was held in the year three hundred ſixty four. Now if what is here ſo confidently aſſerted ſhould prove true, the natural conſequence would be, that we cannot have at ſuch a diſtance of time ſo clear and full aſſurance that the apoſtles were really the authors of thoſe epiſtles, as from the undoubted teſtimony of writers, who liv'd in the apoſtolical age, or in the times neareſt to it.

But it is ſo far from being true, that the writings of the apoſtles were not ſooner receiv'd and acknowledg'd as ſuch by the church, that ſeveral fathers of the church, who beſt knew her ſentiments, and ſpoke conformably to them, cite both goſpels and epiſtles, as of divine authority, and under the very names which they now bear. From whence 'tis reaſonable to conclude, the principal deſign of that council, was not ſo much to declare what books were canonical, or to be receiv'd, as having the ſanction of divine authority (for that was ſufficiently known already) as what books ſo receiv'd, had been thought proper to be read in churches. Which may ſerve to diſcover to us the reaſon, why the book of the revelations, which, on account of ſeveral abſtruſe and myſterious paſſages in it, was not thought ſo edifying when read in churches, as other parts of ſcripture, is omitted in the catalogue of canonical books drawn up by that council.

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* Leviath. part 3. ch. 33.

CHAP. II. PROP. II.

That no very material alterations, or ſuch as may tend to deſtroy their authority, have happen'd in the writings either of the Old or New Teſtament.

SHOULD it now be univerſally granted, that God has formerly made a revelation; that this revelation was originally committed to a ſtanding and authentick writing, under the names of men divinely inſpir'd, and which names they at preſent bear; yet we ſhall ſtill be unable to bring unbelievers to the acknowledgment of the truth, except we can alſo prove to them farther, that theſe writings have been preſerv'd from all impure mixtures, and dangerous innovations. For how ſhall we otherways, ſay they, be able to diſtinguiſh in them, what was really dictated by the Spirit of God, from what has been inſerted, or altered in them; not ſo much perhaps by mere fallible men, as by wicked men, who had a form'd and direct intention to deceive others.

IN anſwer to this queſtion, ſo far as it relates, in the firſt place,

1. To the *Jews*. What has been occaſionally inſinuated, concerning the ſpecial proviſion God was pleas'd to make towards preſerving authentick copies of the *Moſaick* law, by obliging the *Jews* to read it both privately, and in the moſt publick and ſolemn manner, is ſufficient to ſhew how extremely difficult it was, or rather, indeed, morally impoſſible, to have introduc'd any doctrine

oppoſite, or foreign to the deſign of that law, into the body of it; or to have corrupted it in any reſpect whatever, but in a way open to every one's diſcovery; eſpecially ſince there was a particular and ſtrict prohibition in the law itſelf, that no one ſhould preſume to *add unto, or diminiſh ought from it* *.

But as we are not always determin'd to do our duty, by the moſt expreſs commands, however reaſonable in themſelves, when they have no relation to our intereſts, God was pleas'd to add this farther motive towards obliging the *Jews* to preſerve the *Moſaick* law free from all corruption, that the ſeveral tenures and properties, in the diſtribution of the twelve tribes, were aſcertain'd and ſettled by that law. Now men are generally very careful to preſerve thoſe records, upon which their civil rights depend; eſpecially ſuch as they claim by inheritance. But where ſeveral perſons are concern'd, or ſpecify'd in a deed of ſettlement, their mutual emulations, and their ſeparate, as well as common intereſts, will more effectually oblige them to guard, in the former caſe, againſt any falſification of it from one another, and in the latter, from all foreign impoſition; and that too, even in reference to things, which do not affect ſuch a deed, as to its principal uſes or deſign. For a record that may be falſify'd in part, will in ſome meaſure, at leaſt, loſe its credit and authority, even with reſpect to thoſe parts of it, which are not falſify'd.

I ſhall inſtance in another wiſe proviſion towards preventing any corruption in the law of *Moſes*, from the ſpecial promiſes made by God to the *Jews* of temporal bleſſings and enjoyments; the condition whereof was their obedience to the law, and their not turning aſide from it, *to the right hand, or to the left*. This render'd it neceſſary to the *Jews*, as ever they hop'd for peace or plenty; for victory over their enemies, or proſperity in any kind, that the laws, upon the obſervation whereof, theſe bleſſings were promis'd, (and ſome have thought, the generality of the *Jews* carry'd their views no higher) ſhould have been entirely preſerv'd, ſo much as was poſſible, from all falſification; for where there is a failure in the condition upon which any promiſe is made, as there muſt be, where the rules to be obſerv'd are either alter'd, or not diſtinctly known; there the party promiſing is abſolv'd from all obligation of executing his promiſe.

It will be ſaid, perhaps, that theſe arguments only prove the moral impoſſibility of falſifying the law of *Moſes*, conſider'd ſtrictly and properly as ſuch, but they do not prove, that the ſame care was taken to preſerve the other parts of the *Pentateuch* in general from all corruption; or, by name, the book of *Geneſis*; which had no ſuch neceſſary relation to the law; but the credit and authority of it might have ſubſiſted, tho' the *Jews* had not believ'd that book written by *Moſes*, as a perſon divinely inſpir'd.

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* *Deut.* 4. 2.—12. 32.

To which I anſwer, it is ſufficient to my chief purpoſe, to ſhew, that God has made a revelation of his will, contain'd in the writings of the Old and New Teſtament, ſo far as a divine revelation imports, what is certainly the principal end of it, a rule of faith, worſhip, and life. And tho' it was of more ſpecial and immediate concernment to the *Jews* to preſerve this rule in its original purity and perfection; yet as all the obligation of it to them aroſe from the character of *Moſes* as a prophet, it was incumbent on them, in honour to him, faithfully to preſerve whatever book, he had written in that capacity: Leſt any falſification in it ſhould be thought to imply a poſſibility, at leaſt, that the books of the law written by him, might by one means or other, in proceſs of time, have been falſify'd too. For where ſeveral books are publiſh'd under the name of the ſame author; eſpecially where they have an immediate connexion with one another, and all centre in the ſame deſign, any notorious falſification in one or more of them, will naturally be interpreted, in ſome degree, to impair the credit of the reſt.

As to other inſpir'd writings of the Old Teſtament, a continued ſucceſſion of prophets, whoſe ſpecial office it was to reprove and correct any error relating to faith, as well as corruption in practice, render'd it impoſſible that any dangerous variations could have been made in thoſe writings, without their being openly cenſur'd and condemn'd at the very time of making them. Neither is it probable, indeed, that any perſon would ever have attempted to adulterate them in any reſpect, where there was not only a diſtinct order of men, animated with a becoming zeal to prevent the corruption of them; but they were likewiſe in ſo many hands, and ſo openly read and conſulted, that there was ſcarce a private perſon among the *Jews*, but who might have known, if any ſuch thing could have happen'd, both when and wherein they had been corrupted.

WE may add, that the very reaſons upon which the *Jews* admitted any books into their canon, render'd it neceſſary that thoſe books ſhould be preſerv'd in their original purity. For if any material mutilations or additions ſhould have afterwards happen'd in them, their being receiv'd as canonical, had been ſo far from doing ſervice to religion, or anſwering the great end for which they were receiv'd into the canon, that they had afforded a dangerous occaſion of introducing one error or other, under the ſtronger umbrage and pretence of authority.

We have an equal aſſurance, at leaſt, if not on ſome accounts much ſtronger, that the writings of the New Teſtament, when once receiv'd as canonical, could not be, in any dangerous inſtances, corrupted. For beſides that the reaſon laſt mention'd in relation to the *Jews*, holds indifferently with reſpect to the chriſtian canon; the number of copies, which were early extant of the evangelical writings, and generally diſpers'd, render'd any alterations in them, but ſuch as might have been eaſily diſcover'd, altogether impracticable. Accordingly upon every attempt to poyſon theſe ſacred fountains, a diſcovery of it was in due time actually made. The very controverſies which aroſe in the infancy of the church, were not without their uſe towards preſerving the purity of thoſe holy ſcriptures, which compoſe the canon of the New Teſtament. What was added, or mutilated in them by hereticks, as it gave occaſion of expoſing their impious arts and deſigns, ſo it contributed not a little towards the better ſettlement of the true and original text. And the hereticks, on the other hand, were themſelves in ſome degree inſtrumental to this end; as having a watchful eye on the orthodox, leſt they ſhould make uſe of any pious fraud towards interpolating the ſcriptures, which it might poſſibly have been ſuſpected by them, that ſome perſons out of a miſtaken zeal, might on occaſion make no great ſcruple of.

If we conſider the ſtate of this matter in the time of *Euſebius*, there were ſo great a number of copies of the New Teſtament then in being, that few families were without one or more of them. Theſe copies were diſtributed into ſeveral parts of the world, and in the ſeveral languages proper to them. Both the number and variety of the verſions was ſo great, that we may as probably ſuppoſe any corrupt alteration could now be made in *The whole duty of man*, as that in thoſe days any one publick copy could have been ſo artfully corrupted, but it had been eaſy for every body, who had opportunity of making enquiry, to know when it was ſo, and in what reſpects. And as chriſtians might then have recourſe to the originals, preſerv'd in ſeveral great cities, where the epiſcopal ſeat was fix'd, there is as little reaſon to doubt, whether the copies themſelves were faithfully done from them.

If ſome alterations of leſs moment, or various readings, have happen'd in tranſcribing the originals; this is no more, than what it had been natural to expect from the negligence, and, in ſome caſes, from the ignorance, or other common infirmities of the tranſcribers. But it does not in the leaſt deſtroy the credit or authority of the holy ſcriptures, as to ſuch points or doctrines, which are fundamental, and the truth whereof may perhaps be alſo diſcover'd and prov'd by ſeveral intrinſick marks. Who knows, if it was not wiſely permitted by the providence of God, that miſtakes of no dangerous conſequence to the faith, ſhould ſometimes have happen'd, in tranſcribing the holy ſcriptures, to divert the thoughts of learned and inquiſitive men from more uſeleſs enquiries, or which might have leſs reference to the buſineſs of religion. It muſt be own'd, that critical learning, in the view I am now conſidering it, tho' it has put men on many occaſions of trifling after a very elaborate manner; yet is in the natural tendency of it, very commendable; and has really done the cauſe of religion good ſervice, and contributed very much to perſuade men of the truth and authority of the holy ſcriptures, by referring to many ancient records, and the unanimous teſtimony of ſo many ancient fathers concerning the divine inſpiration of them: Tho' they happen'd in ſome points leſs material, and more difficult, to differ in their opinions from one another.

IT may perhaps, in oppoſition to what has been here ſaid, be particularly objected, that the *Syriack*, and moſt ancient verſion of the New Teſtament, did not contain ſome books, which are now recorded in the canon of it. For which reaſon there ſeems cauſe to doubt, whether we can be ſo well aſſur'd, that thoſe books are really genuine. I would obſerve, in the firſt place, that what is here pretended, does not in the leaſt deſtroy, nor can it be deſign'd to do ſo, the authority of thoſe books, which are mention'd in the *Syriack* verſion, ſo that unbelievers can, upon no account, make any advantage of it. For the authority of that verſion, which is here taken for granted, is ſufficient to evince what I am principally contending for, the truth of the chriſtian revelation, as faithfully contain'd in the holy ſcriptures of the New Teſtament in general.

BUT, in the next place, if a particular reaſon may be aſſign'd, why ſome books of the New Teſtament now receiv'd as canonical, might not be found in the *Syriack* verſion, then it can be no argument one way or other, that the preſent copies we have of them are not authentick, becauſe they were not found in it. One reaſon whereof may be, that tho' ſeveral churches receiv'd thoſe books as canonical, upon clear and ſufficient evidence of their being ſo; yet as ſome of them were written on particular occaſions, or upon ſubjects of leſs general * uſe, and three of them to particular perſons, the divine authority of them might not have been on a ſudden univerſally acknowledg'd, becauſe it was not neceſſary that they ſhould have been at firſt univerſally aſcertain'd.

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* The epiſtle to *Philemon*, the ſecond and third epiſtles of St. *John*.

Chap. III. Prop. III.

That the revelation, contain'd in the writings of the Old and New Teſtament, is ſufficiently plain and intelligible, with reſpect to all the great ends, for which it was originally made.

IT will be to little purpoſe to prove againſt unbelievers, or towards confirming the faith of thoſe who already believe, that a divine revelation has been actually made, and recorded in the holy ſcriptures, by perſons divinely inſpir'd; in ſeveral parts of it under their proper names, and without being dangerouſly corrupted in any part; except we can alſo prove to them, that God has afforded us competent means of diſcovering what the true ſenſe of the holy ſcriptures really is: Which, in honour to his wiſdom, we ought indeed to conclude, that he would take care to afford us. As he never propoſes any end for the benefit of his creatures, towards which their concurrence is requir'd, without rendring the attainment of it, at the ſame time, practicable to them.

Yet when I ſpeak of the plainneſs and perſpicuity of the holy ſcriptures, I do not intend that they are ſo plain, as to every thing deliver'd in them, whether in regard to the language or ſubject matter of them, as to exclude the uſe of human induſtry and application, in order to a more perfect knowledge of them. For what can be more reaſonable than in this, and all other caſes, that an all-wiſe God ſhould make it the duty of moral agents to employ ſuch means in purſuit of any advantage, which, conſider'd as moral agents, are moſt proper to be employ'd by them.

I. It is not neceſſary, that the language of the holy ſcriptures ſhould be, in every part of them, equally clear and intelligible; becauſe God may be ſuppos'd, on particular occaſions, to make a revelation of his will to particular perſons, or perhaps to whole communities, in a way accommodated to their ſtate and condition of life, their manners or cuſtoms; which not being known, or, at the beſt, very imperfectly known to other people, eſpecially to ſuch as may be very remote, whether with reſpect to time or place, or perhaps both, the language wherein things, ſo little underſtood in themſelves, are expreſs'd or alluded to, muſt of neceſſity, for that reaſon, appear more dark and intricate, if not to a great number of perſons altogether unintelligible. There are in the *Moſaick* writings ſeveral things, for inſtance, which have a peculiar relation to the ſtate of the *Jews* at that time, expreſs'd after a manner, at preſent not perfectly clear to very learned men, nor even to ſuch perhaps, as have made the greateſt advances in rabbinical learning. But ſuch particular difficulties being only concerning things, whereof we may now be ignorant without endangering our ſalvation, they cannot be objected againſt the perſpicuity of the ſcriptures in general; which are ſufficiently clear with reſpect to the main deſign of them, that is, in all points neceſſary to our common edification.

As to the prophetical writings, reaſons have already been aſſign'd, which I ſhall not here repeat, why the language of them ſhould be ſometimes more obſcure: And where thoſe reaſons do not hold good, it is ſufficient towards juſtifying the wiſdom of God, to ſay, that the obſcurity of certain paſſages in the prophets, relates to things leſs neceſſary to be known; or if to things, the knowledge whereof is really neceſſary to ſalvation, then the obſcurity complain'd of in ſuch paſſages, does not really ariſe ſo much from them, as on occaſion of the voluntary, or poſſibly affected ignorance of thoſe, who have neglected the means of better information. I might obſerve, as to the Pſalms of *David*, that tho' the great deſign of them is to promote piety in the worſhip of God, and they are now particularly to that end tranſlated into our own language; yet there are ſome expreſſions in the verſion ſo obſcure, that notwithſtanding men commonly repeat them with all the appearance of zeal and devotion, which becomes thoſe who *pray with the ſpirit, and the underſtanding alſo*; yet it may be queſtion'd, whether, as to certain paſſages, they are in truth ſo commonly underſtood. The ignorance of men, in relation to thoſe paſſages is nevertheleſs culpable, and not wholly to be charg'd on the obſcurity of them; as by conſulting the books, which have been written to explain them, or perſons of better underſtanding, or thoſe, in particular, whoſe more peculiar office it is to *preſerve knowledge*, they might have been capable of diſcovering the ſenſe of them after a more perfect and diſtinct manner. The reaſons of what I here obſerve concerning certain obſcure paſſages in the Pſalms, as they now appear, will hold indifferently with reſpect to any other like paſſages that occur either in the Old Teſtament, or the New; For the evangelical writers, tho' they wrote in a language which is now more generally underſtood, if I ought not perhaps to except St. *Matthew*, whoſe goſpel was originally publiſh'd in *Hebrew*, yet might alſo on occaſion allude to certain cuſtoms, or expreſs themſelves according to certain idioms, peculiar to the time of their writing, which may now render many paſſages in them more obſcure to illiterate or unattentive perſons, and ſome few perhaps to the moſt learned and inquiſitive. But this conceſſion ought not to be admitted as affording the grounds of any prejudice, againſt the perſpicuity of the ſcriptures, concerning ſuch points as are generally neceſſary to be known. As to theſe, we ſay the ſcriptures are every where ſufficiently clear, or if there ſhould be any part of them in this regard leſs clear, upon comparing it with other parts, the difficulties which appear to attend it, will be eaſily ſolv'd. And indeed the very end of making any divine revelation, requires, that in thoſe articles of it, which it concerns all men principally to know, it ſhould be plain and intelligible to all men.

In this character of plainneſs, if we conſider along with it, the form and dignity of expreſſion, ſeveral writings of the Old Teſtament, and in a manner all the writings of the New, exceed whatever has been at any time publiſh'd by prophane authors. How inſipid are all the flowing elegancies of *Plato*, the ſmooth, tho' elaborate periods of *Cicero*, and the pointed aphoriſms of *Seneca*, in compariſon only of thoſe beauties, which ſtrike us in the ſimple narration of the enterview *Joſeph* had with his brethren at the time of his diſcovering himſelf to them, and in that of the parable of the prodigal ſon.

Indeed all the diſcourſes of our Saviour excel in the three characters before mention'd, and there were reaſons in particular for his expreſſing himſelf, on all occaſions, with ſo much plainneſs and ſimplicity. In proportion to the authority wherewith any perſon is inveſted, a more natural, free, and eaſy language becomes him. Acts of Parliament do not uſually run upon tropes, or other rhetorical ſchemes of ſpeech, whatever eloquence or arts of this kind have been ſometimes employ'd to procure them. But when perſons ſpeak in the proper capacity of law-givers, 'tis below them to make uſe of ſuch inſinuations, as rather tend to leſſen their authority, or render it precarious, than to enforce the commands of it. There was ſtill leſs reaſon why the Son of God, the greateſt of all law-givers, ſhould have deſcended to ſet off the ſeveral rules, whether of faith or life, which he deliver'd to the *Jews* with ſuch pompous and artificial ornaments, as are only common to men, who have no other way to ſupply the want of power towards effecting their deſigns, but by ſuch methods. And therefore 'tis particularly

ticularly obſerv'd concerning our bleſſed Saviour, that *he ſpake as one having authority, and not as the Scribes*; that is, he deliver'd his doctrine and diſcourſes to the *Jews*, after the manner of thoſe who have a right to command, and not of ſuch precarious orators, who have no higher pretenſions than to perſuade, and who, to that end, make uſe of all the common topicks and human arts of perſuaſion, as much as they can.

It is ſo far then from being an objection, tho' ſome men have made it ſo, againſt the doctrine of *Chriſt*, that it is deliver'd in plain, ſimple, and common terms, that they might with much greater reaſon have objected againſt his diſcourſes, had he made uſe of the pompous and magnificent ſtyle in them, which they think would have been more agreeable to the divinity of them, and the dignity of his character.

It muſt be granted indeed, that our Lord ſometimes made uſe of metaphorical expreſſions; but metaphors when plain, apt, and unforc'd, are ſo far from contributing to the obſcurity of ſpeech, that nothing tends more to illuſtrate what is ſpoken, or to give it a more lively and powerful impreſſion on the minds of men.

At other times our Lord, according to a method of teaching, which had much obtain'd among the eaſtern nations, deliver'd his diſcourſes in parables; or ſenſible images and repreſentations of ſuch things, which if they really did not at any time happen in fact, yet might naturally be ſuppos'd to have happen'd. By this means, men became more deſirous of hearing his heavenly doctrine, and were inſtructed by it, at once, after a more eaſy and a more edifying manner. And, indeed, the bare propoſal of ſimple and abſtract truths, ordinarily makes but little impreſſion on the minds of men; few perſons are capable of that denudation and ſilence, that perfect tranquillity and inaction of the ſoul, which the myſticks ſpeak of, and whereby they ſuppoſe, that not only all ſenſible expreſſions, but all ſenſible ideas too are become wholly uſeleſs and improper to the ſublime ſtate ſhe is in. Even perſons, who think regularly, or have accuſtom'd themſelves to a ſtrict and metaphyſical way of reaſoning, find, that figurative or metaphorical expreſſions, provided they repreſent the things they ſtand for in a clear and full light, are generally the moſt ſignificant and affecting. Now a parable is little more than that figure of ſpeech, which we call a metaphor drawn out into greater length, and embelliſh'd with variety of proper incidents. But when we are to inſtruct people concerning things that are indifferently of uſe towards promoting the ſalvation of all men, there the reaſons of diſcourſing to them in the moſt popular and agreeable manner, which is by addreſſing our ſelves to their imagination and ſenſes, become ſtill more evident and ſtrong.

There are, notwithſtanding, in the holy ſcriptures ſome books, and ſeveral paſſages throughout, written in a more noble and ſublime ſtrain. The prophetical writings in general abound with bold and magnificent figures, but ſuch as, with reſpect to the ages wherein the prophets liv'd, were very natural too; as being moſt agreeable to the genius, the warm conceptions, and, I may add, the common ſtyle of the orientaliſts. Tho' it is not indeed neceſſary to ſuppoſe, that any of the inſpir'd penmen in holy writ, had all the words they made uſe of expreſſly dictated to them, at all times, by the Holy Ghoſt. For it not being the deſign of divine revelation to teach men words, but things; the Holy Ghoſt might conſiſtently with his deſign, leave thoſe he inſpir'd to their own manner of expreſſion, provided there was nothing in it repugnant to the doctrine they taught, or to the end, for which they were commiſſion'd to teach it. For otherways their words might have been entirely deſtructive of the things, they were mov'd and commiſſion'd to reveal.

In other caſes it was ſufficient to anſwer all the ends of divine revelation, that the Spirit of God ſhould leave thoſe, he inſpir'd, to expreſs themſelves in a language moſt natural, or proper to them. And for this reaſon we obſerve ſo great a variety of ſtyle throughout the holy ſcriptures; it being uſual for the ſacred penmen, to deliver their thoughts in words or phraſes moſt agreeable to their different capacities, tempers, or circumſtances of life. I might confirm what is here ſaid, by ſeveral inſtances, and particularly out of the book of Pſalms, wherein holy *David*, after he was advanc'd to the throne, yet has frequent alluſions, reſpecting the office, from which he was call'd to it, when he follow'd *the ewes great with young*; as, on the other hand, we may attribute it to the dignity of his royal office, that he ſpeaks of the kingdom of *Chriſt* in terms, than which none could have been employ'd more ſuitable to the magnificence or glory of it. The difference between the noble and lofty ſtyle of *Iſaiah*, who was much converſant at court, and the low rural ſtrain wherein *Amos* writes, and which he had learn'd from the herdſmen of *Tekoah*, have been frequently obſerv'd on the ſame occaſion. But,

II. The holy ſcriptures are alſo ſufficiently plain, with reſpect to the ſubject matter of them; and ſo far as is uſeful towards attaining the great ends of divine revelation in general. For it is not neceſſary, that all things, which God may think fit to reveal, ſhould be of equal importance to be known to all men. If there are ſome doctrines, as ſome there are, in their own nature, more difficult to be fully comprehended; yet it does not follow, but that we may be capable of knowing them, ſo far as they are reveal'd in part, and it was the will of God that they ſhould be known. And therefore it is unreaſonable to urge the difficulty of our accounting, in every reſpect, for ſuch doctrines, againſt the perſpicuity of the goſpel. If the goſpel be really clear and perſpicuous as to ſuch things, which were intended to be reveal'd in it, the obſcurity complain'd of as to ſuch things which were not intended to be reveal'd in it, muſt be an argument againſt the revelation it contains, conſider'd as ſuch, altogether foreign and unreaſonable.

If there are ſome evangelical doctrines, which are, in their own nature, more plain and obvious to human apprehenſion, and which were originally underſtood according to the proper deſign and acceptation of them; but are now render'd more perplex'd and obſcure, on occaſion of certain difficulties, that have been ſince diſcover'd in them by learned men, whether from any motive of vanity or intereſt, of diſcontent or perſonal reſentment, or poſſibly from all of them; yet this objection is of no force to invalidate what we ſay concerning the perſpicuity of the chriſtian revelation, as it ariſes purely from an accidental cauſe, and ought not to be charg'd as having any good foundation in the natural reaſon and propriety of it.

It is, however, incumbent on us to make uſe of all human and proper means, as well in order to diſcover more perfectly the doctrines contain'd in the holy ſcriptures, as towards underſtanding the terms, that are made uſe of to expreſs them. And if we ſearch the ſcriptures to this end, with a *perfect heart*, and a *willing mind*; that is, if we be ſincerely deſirous to be inſtructed in the principles of reveal'd religion, and in conſequence thereof to do the will of God, we may piouſly hope, that we ſhall *know of the doctrine*, ſo far as the knowledge of it is neceſſary or expedient to us, both what it is, and *whether it be of God.*

As to the rules of moral life, or the few poſitive commands of God in the goſpel, tho' wicked men have from time to time endeavour'd to pervert the ſenſe, or fruſtrate the deſign of them; yet they are ſufficiently clear at once in the meaning and the reaſon of them to all pious and unprejudic'd perſons, And ſince God has not propos'd them to us as neceſſary, but moral agents, if through a voluntary ignorance, or any acquir'd indiſpoſition, they become leſs intelligible, or miſapply'd by us, this effect is not to be charg'd to the want of perſpicuity in them, but to the account of ſome culpable neglect, or perverſeneſs in our ſelves; which the cleareſt revelation God may be ſuppos'd to have made concerning any doctrine, would not perhaps have prevented, ſo long as he was pleas'd to leave us to the natural uſe and freedom of our faculties. For what indeed can be ſo clear, that thoughtleſs and indolent perſons ſhall be oblig'd to ſee it, or which ingenious deſigning men cannot wreſt to a falſe conſtruction, at leaſt diſguiſe in ſuch a manner, as to render it more difficult to others to come at the true ſenſe and meaning of it.

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Chap. IV. Prop. IV.

That the revelation contain'd in the Old and New Teſtament, is perfect with reſpect to all the ends, for which it can be thought expedient, that any divine revelation ſhould have been made.

IT is poſſible to conceive, that God may make ſupernatural diſcoveries to men about ſuch things, which, conſider'd in themſelves, are of no immediate or neceſſary conſequence to religion, and only relate to the affairs of human or civil life. But as to a divine revelation, whoſe direct end is to inſtruct men in religious truths and duties, and to ſatisfy every one in that grand enquiry, *what ſhall I do to be ſav'd?* If ſuch a revelation be on all accounts really adapted to attain this end, then we muſt allow it to have all the perfection, which it is neceſſary that any divine revelation, conſider'd in regard to religion, ſhould have.

Now it were eaſy to ſhew by a particular induction, that the ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtament have conjunctly this perfection, and the latter of them in a more ſpecial manner, ſeparately. And it was not neceſſary, that God ſhould have reveal'd his whole and entire will to his creatures at once. As it was a pure act of grace in him to make any revelation at all, what ſhould reſtrain him from making it *at ſundry times, and in divers manners*, as himſelf thought fit. And had he at laſt render'd it leſs perfect or excellent, than we now have it, his creatures, notwithſtanding, had been left without any pretence of replying againſt the juſtice or goodneſs of his procedure, whatever ſpecious objections might have been form'd againſt the wiſdom of it. And indeed, as it is the peculiar character of God, that *his way is always perfect*,

fect, it ſeems more agreeable to our notions of this attribute, that after he had determin'd to make a revelation of his will to mankind, he would, in his due time, give it all the perfection which they could conceive it ought to have. And this perfection, we ſay, the revelation made in the Old and New Teſtament actually has. But without enumerating the ſeveral excellencies of it, whether conſider'd as a rule of faith, of worſhip, or life; which would be unneceſſary, when we ſpeak to chriſtians, who are ſuppos'd to be converſant in the holy ſcriptures; it is ſufficient in general to obſerve againſt unbelievers, that themſelves muſt confeſs, no rule in any of the foremention'd reſpects could have been contriv'd more proper for God to preſcribe, or for man to be regulated by; none, that could have ſo eaſily reconcil'd the holineſs and dignity of the divine, with the frail ſtate and condition of human nature.

BUT becauſe the moſt excellent rules, and the beſt projected meaſures do not always affect us as they ought, eſpecially where it is not evident, that we ſhall reap ſome conſiderable advantage by complying with them; God has been pleas'd to enforce, whatever he has preſcrib'd, in the revelation made by him, as our duty, whether relating to faith or practice, by the propoſal of the greateſt and moſt glorious rewards. And, as a farther inſtance of his wiſdom, the means, which he has directed, of attaining them, are the proper qualifications to render us moſt capable of enjoying them. Whatever objections unbelievers may raiſe, for which, nevertheleſs, they can have no real grounds, againſt the chriſtian revelation, as containing ſome things, which they apprehend to be ſuperfluous or redundant; yet none of them can ſo much as pretend, that there is any thing wanting or defective in it. We may challenge the moſt virulent adverſaries of chriſtianity, to inſtance in any one doctrine, that is not reveal'd to us, that would more effectually contribute, than thoſe which are reveal'd already, either to diſcover the nature, or enforce the duties of that holineſs, which the goſpel requires, in order at once to entitle us to eternal life, and to prepare us the better for it.

So that the deiſts themſelves, tho' they deny the truth of the chriſtian revelation, are leſs enemies to the perfection of it, as a rule of our faith or conduct, than even ſome who profeſs themſelves chriſtians.

AMONG theſe, I ſhall, in the firſt place, exhibit my charge againſt certain enthuſiaſts, who come under the general, but, as it is now commonly us'd, moſt equivocal and indefinite name of proteſtants.

I would aſk then, whether the truths, whereby they pretend their minds are inwardly enlighten'd, can be render'd intelligible to others, or not? If they may be expreſs'd in words, ſo as to convey clear and diſtinct ideas of them to other men, why could not the ſacred penmen, whom the Holy Ghoſt originally inſpir'd, have found out words equally at leaſt proper and ſignificant to expreſs the doctrines reveal'd to them. And if they could have done it, which muſt be granted, there is all the reaſon in the world to believe they have done it: For otherways, why did they commit ſuch doctrines to any writing at all?

But if what they call the light within be no more than a confus'd diſcovery of ſuch things to their minds, whereof they cannot, after any intelligible manner, expreſs their conceptions; this is an argument, that ſuch things are really unintelligible in their own nature, at leaſt cannot be, what theſe enthuſiaſts will not admit, of any uſe but to themſelves alone.

Others therefore pretend, that tho' the ſcriptures contain a great many excellent truths, which are fully expreſs'd in them; yet they are principally calculated for novices, or young beginners in religion, in order to teach them the firſt eſſays and rudiments of it; but are very defective, when we ſpeak of thoſe, who have attain'd to higher diſpenſations of grace, or have made greater progreſs in the divine life towards a more intimate union with God.

These are the ſentiments wherewith thoſe of the myſtical way abound, tho' they often affect to expreſs them in terms, that are very ſingular and extravagant *. But beſides that they directly charge the ſcriptures with the want of that perfection we contend for, their notions open a way to all manner of error and illuſion. For as they have no certain or ſtated rule of judging, they are in much greater danger of miſtaking the viſions of a heated and diſorder'd imagination, for the dictates of the Holy Spirit. And if we may judge from what has too frequently happen'd, they who, in oppoſition to the holy ſcriptures, ſet up any

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* I ſhall here take leave to cite a paſſage concerning the myſticks, and their manner of expreſſing themſelves, out of that excellent book, *The cauſes of the preſent corruption of chriſtians*, and in the words of the engliſh tranſlator. "According to them, the way to perfection and ſolid virtue, is for a man to be in a ſtate of inaction, to go out of himſelf, to annihilate himſelf; to have neither thoughts, nor deſires, nor will; but to be, as it were, dead in the ſight of God. For thus they expreſs themſelves, in figurative and myſterious words. Under pretence of aſcribing all to God, they aſſert that man is a mere nothing, and an abyſs of miſery; that in order to be happy, it is enough for us to be ſenſible of our nothingneſs, and to wait in ſilence and tranquillity, till God is pleas'd to work his will in us; and that when the ſoul is thus in a ſtate of inaction, and entirely abandons itſelf to God, then it is that God ſpeaks to and operates in it. *Part* 1. *cauſe* 2. *art*. 8.

other light, wherein they hope more clearly to diſcover, what is the *good*, and *acceptable*, and *perfect* will of God, have greater reaſon to fear, that this, by the juſt judgment of God, may really prove their own caſe.

The Papiſts are ſo ſenſible of the dangers and inconveniences to which men are expos'd, in pretending the neceſſity either of an immediate inſpiration to aſcertain the ſenſe, or to ſupply the defects of the holy ſcriptures, that they have, inſtead of a private ſpirit, ſubſtituted to theſe ends a publick infallible judge, and the doctrine of oral tradition; for as to written tradition of any antiquity, they find themſelves more oblig'd, or rather neceſſitated to give up the point. As to the former of theſe notions, I need ſay nothing at preſent, but that themſelves are far from being agreed in acquainting us, who this infallible judge is, or where, upon occaſion, we may apply to him. Whereas if there had been a neceſſity for ſuch a judge, or God had thought fit to appoint him, there is the higheſt reaſon in the world to believe, he would have been ſo diſtinguiſh'd, that every one might have known him, with the place from which he was to deliver his oracles. Where we are to ſubmit, without appeal, to any authority in affairs of the laſt concernment to us, and to the honour and truth of religion; the wiſdom and goodneſs of God require, that the notification of ſuch an authority ſhould be, what they who argue for it will not pretend it to be, very particular and expreſs.

But let us enquire, whether the pretence of oral tradition, to ſupply the defects of the holy ſcriptures in point of certain doctrines, be more juſt or reaſonable? We deny that it is ſo upon the following accounts, which I ſhall previouſly mention, and then proceed to conſider the arguments for it.

1. This way of conveying any doctrine through ſucceſſive ages, and the many revolutions of human affairs which happen in them, is very uncertain. If we are at ſo great a loſs to know the certain truth of things, which are ſaid and done openly every day, how eaſy is it for a report, which is to be communicated from almoſt an infinite number of perſons of different tempers, deſigns, and intereſts, for centuries of years, to be ſo falſify'd or diſguis'd, that there can be no certain rules of diſtinguiſhing what it really was in the original ſenſe and intention of it.

2. This way of conveying the doctrines of chriſtianity had ſomething ſtill more particularly liable to exception in it. For as the chriſtian religion was early to be ſpread among different and very diſtant nations, which neither underſtood the language of one another, nor had any ſettled communication, if any chriſtian doctrine had principally depended on the evidence of oral tradition,

ſhould

ſhould it not have been what was very likely, in one reſpect or other, dangerouſly corrupted; yet the proofs of it could not poſſibly have been made out in ſo clear and ſatisfactory a manner, as was requiſite to eſtabliſh an article of faith, and to perſuade men to embrace it, without any doubt or ſcruple, as ſuch.

3. Our Saviour and his apoſtles, in the controverſies they had with the *Jews*, did not appeal to their oral or written traditions, but to the authority of the books receiv'd into their canon, *to the law and to the teſtimony*, which themſelves were exhorted to conſult, and to be concluded by. Our Lord particularly directs them to *ſearch the ſcriptures:* He condemns them for tranſgreſſing *the commandments of God by their traditions* *. And charges them with worſhipping God *in vain*, becauſe they taught *for doctrines the commandments of men* †.

4. The moſt learned of the Papiſts themſelves are forc'd to acknowledge, that the ‡ ſcriptures contain all the doctrines ſimply neceſſary to be believ'd. And as to doctrines, which are uſeful to the ends of piety, and do not oppugn any doctrines of ſcripture, but rather tend to illuſtrate or confirm them, there can be no inconvenience in allowing the ſame authority, or paying an equal deference to the tradition of them well atteſted, that we do to any human diſcourſe or hiſtorical writing.

I have endeavour'd here to ſpeak the ſenſe of our church, in her ſixth article, *concerning the ſufficiency of holy ſcriptures for ſalvation*; and which ſhe expreſſes in theſe words: *Holy ſcripture containeth all things neceſſary to ſalvation; ſo that whatever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be requir'd of any man, that it ſhould be believ'd as an article of faith, or be thought requiſite or neceſſary to ſalvation.*

But becauſe there are, after all, ſome objections pretended in favour of tradition, as if it were neceſſary to ſupply certain defects in the holy ſcriptures, I ſhall deſcend to conſider two or three of them, but with all the conciſeneſs poſſible. And,

1. It is objected from the authority of St. *John*, that our Saviour did many things, which *if they were all written, the whole world could not contain them.* But it is evident from the very words of the apoſtle in this paſſage, that they relate to the facts, which were done by our Saviour, and not to the doctrines, which are the ſubject of our preſent enquiry, taught by him; if they ſhould be allow'd to relate to the doctrines, they do not import the multiplicity of them, or any diſtinct articles of faith, from thoſe contain'd in the ſcriptures, but only, according to St. *Au-*

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* *Mat.* 15. 3, 6. † —— 15. 9. ‡ V. Bellarm. de V. T. lib. 4. c. 11.

St. *Auguſtin*'s interpretation, the incapacity of carnal or worldly minded men to receive them.

2. They object to us, that the apoſtle commends the *Corinthians* for keeping *the ordinances*, which he *had deliver'd to them*[*]: And that he expreſsly charges the *Theſſalonians*, to *ſtand faſt and hold the traditions, which they had been taught, whether by word, or by his epiſtle*[†]. But it does not follow, that either theſe ordinances or traditions, were concerning ſuch doctrines, which properly fall under our preſent conſideration, as generally neceſſary to be known or believ'd by all chriſtians; but might only contain certain rules of order proper at that time to the ſtate of theſe two particular churches. Neither can it be made appear, that if they related to any fundamental doctrines of chriſtianity, that they were not afterwards inſerted in the canon of ſcripture.

3. We are told, that many learned men have been of opinion, that certain books of the holy ſcriptures have been loſt. Should this really be true, which other very learned men have diſputed, it could not from hence be inferr'd, that the books which have periſh'd contain'd any doctrines different from thoſe, which are taught and eſtabliſh'd in the preſent canon.

But to thoſe who believe the ſcriptures, one would think all arguments, either in proof of their ſufficiency and perfection, or in anſwer to the objections againſt them, wholly unneceſſary; ſeeing they are confeſſedly, as the canon of them is now eſtabliſh'd, in general *able to make us wiſe unto ſalvation*[‡]; and *profitable*, in particular, *for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly eſtabliſh'd unto every good work*[**].

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[*] 1 *Cor.* 11. 2.

[†] 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 15.

[‡] 2 *Tim.* 3. 15.

[**] —— 16, 17

SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

BOOK III.
Of Creation and Providence.

PART I.
Of Creation.

CHAP. I.
In what ſenſe creation is to be underſtood.

IT has been the opinion of ſeveral learned men, that we cannot conclude from the natural force of the word, which in ſcripture is render'd to *create*, or *creation*, that God made all things out of nothing. From whence they would argue, that the creation of the univerſe, as comprehending things viſible and inviſible, cannot, according to the ſenſe wherein it is ſometimes underſtood, be an article of faith to thoſe, who believe the divine authority of the ſcripture. But this way of arguing is inconcluſive, even upon ſuppoſition, that creation does not, in the natural conſtruction of the word, import, what other learned men have thought it does in the inſpir'd writings, the production of things into a ſtate of exiſtence, which did not exiſt before. For if it appear from the principles of natural reaſon, that God alone is eternal, and ſelf-exiſtent, then it will unavoidably follow, that whatever being did exiſt in time, muſt have deriv'd its exiſtence either immediately from him, or from ſome cauſe acting by a power communicated (if any ſuch power be really communicable) from him. And if there were no word in the *Hebrew* language more proper to denote, that all things were really produc'd out of nothing by God, than that word [*], which *Moſes* made uſe of to this end, ſuppoſing it to have been his real intention to aſſert this doctrine, then the authority of the ſcriptures muſt be allow'd ſufficiently clear and full to our preſent purpoſe, tho' the ſame word in a lower or leſs ſtrict ſenſe, may ſometimes be apply'd to ſignify the formation [†] of things out of pre-exiſtent matter. It is a method of reaſoning, which will not be admitted in any other caſe, that becauſe a word ſometimes bears an improper ſignification, therefore we cannot certainly know, where, or upon what occaſion it is to be underſtood ſtrictly; eſpecially when the natural reaſon and evidence of the thing ſhews, that it muſt be ſo underſtood.

I ſhall not, however, repeat here the ſeveral arguments before produc'd to ſhew, that all other beings owe their origin to the will and power of God; I ſhall only take this opportunity of conſidering the great and popular objection, that has been ſo often alledg'd againſt this article, founded upon a maxim, in certain reſpects, inconteſtable, that out of nothing, nothing can be effected. For,

1. If it be hereby intended, that whatever is brought into being, which did not exiſt before, muſt have ſome cauſe of its exiſtence, nothing can be more true or demonſtrable. For what is not, cannot act; and what is in no ſenſe capable of action, can have no effect.

2. The truth of this maxim is no leſs evident, if we underſtand by it, that whatever is produc'd, muſt have had a cauſe of ſufficient power and perfection to produce it. For to ſuppoſe any thing

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[*] All that can rationally be inferr'd, is, that from the mere force and importance of that word, the contrary cannot be collected: But if other places of ſcripture compar'd, and the evidence of reaſon do make it clear, that there could be no pre-exiſtent matter, which was uncreated, then it will neceſſarily follow, that creation muſt be taken in its proper ſenſe. *Still. orig. ſacr. p.* 296.

[†] *Gen.* 1. 21, 27.

effected by an unequal or incompetent cauſe, is really, ſo far as it exceeded the power of ſuch a cauſe, to ſuppoſe it effected without any cauſe. The idea of power, and that of a cauſe, are naturally and inſeparably united in the mind; and it is equally impoſſible, that a power, which is not in a being that already exiſts, ſhould be communicated, as that which does not already exiſt, ſhould be capable of acting, or giving exiſtence to itſelf.

3. But if men would infer from this maxim, that 'tis impoſſible for almighty power to give being to things which had none before, it is ſo far from implying a contradiction in the nature of the thing, that nothing can be more repugnant, or indeed contradictory to the ſuppoſition of ſuch a power.

Almighty power implies, that he who is inveſted with it, is capable of doing every thing that is poſſible to be done, and every thing is poſſible to be done, the effecting whereof implies no contradiction. But how does it contradict any principle of natural reaſon, that ſomething ſhould be produc'd out of nothing, or which had no exiſtence, before it was produc'd. To ſay a thing may, and yet may not be at the ſame time, is indeed a contradiction to the moſt clear and diſtinct notions, which the mind can form; and it would be impoſſible, were this admitted, to prove any thing either true or falſe. But to ſay, that omnipotence may cauſe that to be, which before was not, bears no repugnancy in general to the natural order of our ideas, tho' we are not able to comprehend the particular manner, neither is it neceſſary that we ſhould, how the divine power operates ſo extraordinary an effect, and which is peculiar to it. Yet I intimated farther, that the contradiction does not lie on our part, who aſſert that God may produce ſomething out of nothing, but on theirs, who acknowledge him omnipotent, and nevertheleſs deny that he can produce ſomething out of nothing. For to ſay, the power of God is infinite, and yet that he cannot exert it, without a previous and paſſive principle to work upon, is to confound the ideas of finite and infinite, and really to diveſt him of that power, which we would appear, at the ſame time, to attribute to him. For if any ſubſtance, actually in being, is of neceſſity pre-requir'd to his operation, then his power is not infinite, but limited, and depends, as to the exerciſe of it, upon that ſubſtance.

But tho' we cannot perfectly conceive how any thing can be produc'd out of nothing, tho' by a power confeſſedly infinite; yet even what finite power itſelf is able to effect, may ſerve to give us ſome faint notion concerning the poſſibility of the thing. For we not only experience in our ſelves a capacity of producing a ſenſible motion in bodies, where there was none before, but of producing in our minds new modifications of them, and even certain

tain ideas of things, which never had, nor ever will have any real exiſtence. And tho' we grant, that theſe ideas, ſeparately conſider'd, have ſome foundation, in the nature of things, really exiſting, as the idea of gold, for inſtance, and that of a mountain; yet the uniting them, in reſpect to the ſame ſubject, is perfectly an act of our own mind; and as the mind, which perceives this union, cannot ſee what in no ſenſe is not, it may in ſome ſenſe not improperly be term'd a creature of the mind.

IT may be queſtion'd indeed, whether all our ideas of corporeal beings are not form'd in our minds, not from any power they have in themſelves to excite in us ſuch ideas from our ſight of them, or any other ſenſible way of conveyance; but only occaſionally, in conſequence of the laws of union between our ſouls and bodies, whereby God has determin'd, that ſuch notices ſhall be produc'd in the mind, according to certain impreſſions made on our bodily organs. For there cannot, in the natural reaſon of the thing, be any account given of the likeneſs or reſemblance, which the modes of a ſpiritual ſubſtance bear to thoſe of a corporeal ſubſtance: Or how certain material images ſhould be communicated to the mind, ſo as to excite ideas in it of a nature correſponding to them; but either upon the hypotheſis of our ſeeing all things in God, or elſe from a power in our ſelves, on occaſion of external objects, to modify the ſoul after ſuch a manner, as may ſerve to convey to it proper and diſtinct reſemblances of them. The former of theſe notions has not generally obtain'd: And yet the more ſtrictly it is examin'd, it will perhaps be found a more intelligible way of accounting how the mind comes to the notice of corporeal objects, than any other method, which thoſe who decry it will ever be able to aſſign; except that which I have mention'd, which yet is not without its difficulties; namely, that God has implanted a power in the mind of forming ideas in itſelf, by occaſion of certain ſenſible objects, which yet are not the matter out of which they are properly or directly form'd.

I do not ſay, this power in the mind of producing its own ideas, bears any juſt proportion to the power of God in creating ſubſtances, material or immaterial, which had no being before; I only deſign, by this inſtance, to ſhew, that the bringing ſomething out of nothing does not in general imply a contradiction; and if finite beings be able to move bodies, or give a new determination to them, when already in motion, and even to modify anew the operations of their own minds, what reaſon is there to believe, that infinite power cannot produce the very ſubſtances themſelves, which thus think, and move? To confine my ſelf to beings of the latter kind, were I not convinc'd by experience of my ability to move certain bodies; it would, for any thing I can ſee to the contrary, have been as impoſſible for me to have known, by conſulting the natural light of my mind, that I could move the pen wherewith I write, as that I could have originally produc'd it out of nothing. It may not, by parity of reaſon, ariſe from the natural impoſſibility of the thing, that men ſo difficultly believe the univerſe to have been produc'd by the power of God out of nothing, as from our having no experimental knowledge that it was ſo produc'd, and after what manner; or from our not obſerving that, in the natural order of cauſes, any ſuch effect is produc'd at preſent. It was more eſpecially upon this laſt ground, that the ancient philoſophers in general believ'd the eternity of matter; tho' nothing can be more unphiloſophical, than to argue from the eſtabliſh'd courſe of things, concerning a power, which we ſay, and are able to prove, was neceſſarily previous to it; and even to the exiſtence of thoſe things themſelves. What therefore is aſſerted by *Ocellus Lucanus*, from whom *Ariſtotle* is ſuppos'd to have borrow'd the * maxim I am conſidering †, " *that it is impoſſible a thing ſhould be produc'd by that which is not, or when once in being, be afterwards annihilated.* This way of arguing, I ſay, does not in the leaſt affect us, who believe the creation in a ſtrict ſenſe; becauſe, ſo far as we are concern'd in it, it proceeds upon a ſuppoſition, without proof, that the only rule we have of judging concerning the origin of things, is from the preſent eſtabliſhment and viſible powers of them; which ſuppoſition we not only deny, but are able to demonſtrate the falſhood of. The courſe of natural cauſes and effects, and the manner of producing works of art in this life, which always ſuppoſe previous matter for men to work upon, were what few of the ancients had force of mind, when they reaſon'd upon the works of God, to free their imaginations from. Tho' there is a paſſage ‡ in *Ariſtotle* himſelf, which ſeems to imply, that ſome of them did believe the creation of things in the ſenſe I am contending for, as having not originally exiſted of themſelves, but owing their origin to ſome efficient cauſe.

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* Ἀμήχανον γὰρ τὸ ὂν ἀποτέλεσθαι ἐκ τῶν μὴ ὄντων, ἢ εἰς τὸ μὴ ὂν ἀπολυθῆναι.

† *Plutarch*, tho' he own'd the formation of things by the power of God, yet as to their original has adopted the ſame notion. Τὸν μὲν κόσμον ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγονέναι, τὴν δὲ οὐσίαν καὶ ὕλην ἐξ ἧς γέγονεν, οὐ γενομένην. For which he aſſigns this reaſon; οὐ γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος γένεσις, &c. *There can be no production of any thing out of nothing, but only out of ſomething pre-exiſting, not duly or regularly diſpos'd, as in the forming of a houſe, garment, or ſtatue.*

‡ Εἰσὶ γάρ τινες οἵ φασιν οὐδὲν ἀγέννητον εἶναι τῶν πραγμάτων, ἀλλὰ πάντα γίγνεσθαι. *lib.* 3. *c.* 1. *de cœlo.* I know theſe words are interpreted as if *Ariſtotle* did not deſign by them, that there is nothing, which is not generated as to the matter of it, but only as to the form; yet in their natural conſtruction, they ſeem more capable of the ſenſe, according to which I have cited them.

IT muſt, however, be granted, that what *Cicero* introduces *Balbus* ſpeaking in reference to the diſquiſitions of men concerning the divine nature and works, is very applicable to the ſentiments and diſcourſes of the ancient philoſophers in general, upon theſe heads. * *Nothing*, ſays he, *is more difficult, when God is the ſubject of our enquiries, than to diſengage the mind from thoſe obſervations, which it has continually drawn from the viſible appearance of things.*

As to that part of the objection, which relates to our incapacity of conceiving, how matter, or any other ſubſtance, could be brought into a ſtate of exiſtence, which had none before. We anſwer, that this difficulty only reſpecting the manner of the divine operation in creating the world, and not implying any natural impoſſibility in the reaſon of the thing, is of no more force to overthrow what has been ſaid concerning creation in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe, than the former difficulty from the preſent eſtabliſh'd order of natural cauſes. Beſides, in all queſtions, where we are preſs'd with difficulties on both ſides, we ought to conſider well on what ſide the proofs are moſt ſtrong and evident, and from which of them, upon our admitting it, the greateſt abſurdities will follow. Now it is more difficult to conceive, how matter, which is a principle purely paſſive, could eternally exiſt of itſelf, than how it could be created in time by the action of an omnipotent being. We may argue farther, that whatever is ſelf-exiſtent, muſt for that reaſon, and in the natural courſe of our meditations upon it, be independent. From whence we ſhall be forc'd to conclude, what even thoſe, who deny creation in a ſtrict ſenſe, will not admit, that matter was ſo far from being originally produc'd by God, that it was not ſo much as form'd by him, according to the preſent order and ſyſtem of things. Neither is it, nor can poſſibly be, upon this ſuppoſition, in any reſpect under his influence or direction. The objections, I ſay, in this, as in all other caſes of difficulty, ought to be laid together; and then the arguments for the production of the world out of nothing, will, I do not queſtion, appear much ſtronger, and attended with fewer difficulties and inconveniences, than any which can be brought againſt this principle, or for the ſelf-exiſtence and eternity of matter. It muſt be confeſs'd, there are a great many difficulties, which lie againſt the ſuppoſition, that matter is infinitely diviſible, and whereof it is extremely difficult to give a clear and particular ſolution. But it is ſufficient that we are able in general to demonſtrate the infinite diviſibility of it; having once done this, all the difficulties on the other ſide are to be conſider'd, purely as ſuch, without affecting the truth already confirm'd and acknowledg'd.

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* *In quo, nihil eſt difficilius, quàm à conſuetudine oculorum, aciem mentis abducere.* De nat. deor.

BUT are we then only to ſeek for the proofs of creation, in a ſtrict ſenſe, from the principles of natural reaſon? I anſwer, that ſome learned men have thought that it might be prov'd directly from the authority of ſcripture, that God produc'd all things out of nothing. But as it is of no real ſervice to any truth to bring precarious or inconcluſive arguments in proof of it, after my having cited a text or two from the holy ſcriptures commonly alledg'd to prove the point in queſtion, I ſhall obſerve, why, in my humble opinion, it cannot be ſufficiently eſtabliſh'd upon them.

THE two principal texts to this purpoſe, are cited from the writings of St. *Paul:* He tells us in the former, that *God calleth the things, which be not, as though they were* *. And in his epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, theſe words are interpreted to the ſame effect; *Through faith we underſtand, that the worlds were fram'd by the word of God; ſo that things, which are ſeen, were not made of things, which do appear* †. The former of theſe paſſages, as appears from the context, particularly relates to the power of God, in calling men to life again from the ſtate of the dead; which rather ſuppoſes the pre-exiſtence of matter to be animated and inform'd afterwards, than the creation of it out of nothing. The moſt we can infer from the words, is, that God can by a ſupernatural energy, produce thoſe effects, which, in the ordinary courſe of nature, as things now exiſt, could not poſſibly be produc'd. The other text in the beginning of it, and as the words are moſt naturally to be explain'd, only imports the formation of things, or the diſpoſing them after a certain order or ſyſtem, into the compoſition whereof they did not enter before. The clauſe of the text, where it is ſaid, that *things which are ſeen, were not made of things, which do appear*, is not neceſſarily to be interpreted, from the mere force of the words, concerning things which had antecedently no exiſtence, but may only be underſtood of the confus'd ſtate of things, in which they originally lay without any form or order, and wherein there was no appearance of that beautiful ſcheme, according to which they were afterwards diſpos'd and eſtabliſh'd. If it could be directly made evident from the holy ſcriptures, that we are to underſtand creation, as expreſs'd in them, according to the ſtrict ſenſe; this, we acknowledge, would moſt effectually ſilence all objections againſt the poſſibility of the thing. A divine authority admits of no diſpute. But then the pretence of authority to ſupport any doctrine, when ſuch authority is not ſufficiently clear and expreſs, only tends to prejudice men againſt the reaſons and evidence of that doctrine in other reſpects. And therefore I chuſe rather to argue, all we can infer from what the ſcriptures ſpeak concerning the creation of things, is, that they ought to be explain'd, not as ſtrictly importing creation, from the natural force of the word; but becauſe the natural reaſon of the thing obliges us to put the ſtricteſt ſenſe upon it; which yet in itſelf too, it will properly bear.

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* *Rom.* 4. 17.

† *Heb.* 11. 3.

CHAP. II.

When, and in what ſpace of time, the world was created.

BY the world, I here underſtand created beings in general, whether material, or immaterial. And tho', according to the hiſtory of *Moſes*, it could be evidently inferr'd, that matter was created only about ſix thouſand years ſince; yet it may be queſtion'd, whether immaterial ſubſtances were not created before. And the time of their creation being indefinite, it might, for any thing we know, have preceded that of matter many millions of ages. According to the opinion of *Gregory Nazianzen* *, and afterwards of St. *Jerom*, † wherein, as the great ſchoolman tells us, he ſpeaks agreeably to the ſentiments of all the *Greek* fathers.

BUT this being a queſtion upon which the ſcriptures are ſilent, men are more at liberty to determine on which ſide of it they pleaſe, according to that light and evidence which ariſes to them in their own way of reaſoning, or the deference which they bear to any human authority. Tho' indeed, by conſulting our own reaſon, except we could poſſibly ſuppoſe the creation of immaterial beings to have been from all eternity, we can form no argument from the goodneſs of God, which is the only foundation of our arguing in this caſe, that they were created any time before the creation of matter. Becauſe, how far ſoever we may run back the time, when we ſuppoſe them to have been created, it will bear no more proportion to eternity, than if they had only been created ſix thouſand years ago. And therefore whatever force may lie in what is now objected againſt the goodneſs of God, that he did not create intelligent beings ſooner, it would have been equally ſtrong, from what former period of time ſoever their creation might be calculated. And the ſame conſideration may indifferently ſerve in anſwer to thoſe who object to us, upon our own principles, the novelty and ſhort duration of the viſible world.

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* In ſerm. de natal.

† *Qui omnes in hôc concorditer ſentiunt, quòd angeli ſunt ante corporeum mundum creati.* Aquin. prima primæ. Quæſt. 61. art. 3.

The acts of divine goodneſs being perfectly free in both reſpects, it depended on the ſole pleaſure of God, whether he would proceed to operate externally in either reſpect; there could be nothing, according to any ideas we have of his moral perfections, to fix the creation of any thing ſooner or later than his own arbitrary will determin'd. We muſt therefore ſeek for ſome other reaſons, than thoſe taken from our conſulting the attributes of God, to ſhew, why the creation of intelligent beings preceded that of material beings; if, after all, it really did precede it.

Now it ſeems credible, at leaſt, from the fall of the angels, and their ſeducing man, ſo ſoon after he was created, to ſin, that they did exiſt ſome time before the creation of the material world. It does not ſeem reaſonable, for here we cannot pretend to demonſtrate, that thoſe glorious beings, as they are confeſs'd to have been, in their original ſtate, ſhould immediately have form'd or executed a deſign of rebelling againſt their maker: Eſpecially when we conſider, in all other reſpects, the nature of ſuch a rebellious attempt, the numbers that were to be engag'd in it, and the previous arts neceſſary to be practis'd by the heads of it, to that end, upon them.

Others have differ'd, as to the time of creating the matter, whereof this viſible frame and ſyſtem of things is compos'd; eſpecially as to the matter of the empyreal heaven, which St. *Baſil* ſomewhere deſcribes by that light which is beyond the world; in oppoſition to the *Manichees*, more perhaps than from any natural evidence that he was able to diſcover of the thing. St. *Auguſtin* embrac'd the ſame opinion. Thoſe hereticks objected againſt the hiſtory of the creation, as aſcrib'd to the moſt perfect being, that ſuch a being would not have begun his work in the dark, and from thence have concluded, that the God of the Old Teſtament, was not the true and good principle, but the evil one.

But there was no neceſſity for thoſe pious fathers, of having recourſe to the ſuppoſition of a luminous heaven, prior to the other works of God, towards anſwering ſo very weak and trifling an objection. For what was more irrational, or rather indeed unworthy

thy of God, than to ſuppoſe, that he could have occaſion for any external light, either to ſhew him after what manner he was to operate, or the ſubject matter of his operation. He is his own light; and the words whereby the Pſalmiſt celebrates his perfection in this reſpect, are true in the moſt ſtrict and philoſophical ſenſe, *The darkneſs hideth not from him; but the night ſhineth as the day; the darkneſs and the light are both alike to him* *.

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CHAP. III.

Whether the formation of things was perfected at once?

SHOULD we grant, that the creation of all material ſubſtances commenc'd at the ſame time; ſtill another queſtion ariſes, which I am in the next place to ſpeak to, whether the diſpoſition of things, according to that order, wherein we now behold them, was really made at once, or ſucceſſively in the ſpace of ſix days? St. *Auguſtin* is of opinion, that we are not to underſtand by the days and nights mention'd in the firſt chapter of *Geneſis* †, the order wherein things were created, but wherein they were gradually communicated to the knowledge of the angels. Others have thought, that the formation of things was not ſucceſſive, according to the *Moſaick* account, but inſtantaneous, as being moſt agreeable to our ideas of the divine wiſdom; for we ought never, ſay they, to ſuppoſe that God employs more time in his action, than is neceſſary to produce the thing deſign'd by it.

As to the opinion of this father, it ſeems to put a force upon the words of *Moſes*, which they will not eaſily bear. For tho' light is ordinarily us'd in a metaphorical ſenſe to ſignify knowledge, and the day, by a like form of ſpeech, may ſignify light; yet it is too harſh and unuſual a way of expreſſion to repreſent the knowledge of things ſucceſſively communicated to intelligent beings, by a ſucceſſion of days and nights. Neither is the conſtruction of the ſeveral parts of the world at once, reconcileable to the plain and literal ſenſe of *Moſes* throughout the whole firſt chapter of *Geneſis*.

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* *Pſal.* 139. 12.

† Which laid the grounds of that known diſtinction in the ſchools, *cognitio veſpertina & matutina*.

Geneſis. For tho' it is pretended, that we are not to conſider *Moſes*, as having a deſign to teach the *Jews* philoſophy, but religion, and to inſtruct them in thoſe principles, which were moſt proper to enforce the duties of it; yet to grant that any part of the ſcripture gives a falſe repreſentation of facts, or is not ſtrictly true in a philoſophical ſenſe, except perhaps where they ſpeak * according to appearance, or notions commonly receiv'd, is a conceſſion that affords too great advantage to the enemies of reveal'd religion. But as to things reported in the ſcriptures to have happen'd, without any regard to popular opinion, and in as plain and ſtrong terms, as had been moſt proper, ſuppoſing they really did happen; here certainly it concerns us, in order to preſerve the credit and authority of the ſcriptures, to aſſert, that the report of thoſe things is, ſtrictly and philoſophically ſpeaking, true.

As to what is objected againſt the wiſdom of God, ſuppoſing the truth of that account, which *Moſes* gives concerning the gradual progreſs of his work in the formation of things; it is anſwer'd, by ſaying, that God indeed does always employ the moſt ſimple and ready means towards effecting his deſign, where there are not reaſons ſuperior to thoſe which are urg'd for the ſimplicity or immediate production of his work, why it ſhould not be effected immediately. For all wiſe agents will principally conſider the end, for which they act, and be careful not to loſe the benefit of it, for the ſake of acting in a manner, which otherways, abſtractedly conſider'd, might perhaps have appear'd moſt worthy of them.

Now tho' we are not able to aſſign all the particular reaſons, why God gradually form'd the world, I only ſpeak here of the material world, in the ſpace of ſix days, when he might with the ſame facility have form'd, that he created it in an inſtant; yet we are able to offer ſome reaſons for the divine conduct in this reſpect, ſufficient to juſtify the wiſdom of it. And,

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* " The ſcriptures might make uſe of popular expreſſions and forms of ſpeech; neither affirming nor denying the philoſophical truth of them, but intending them only in that ſenſe and meaning, which was their ſole deſign in uſing them. All proverbial ſayings, and metaphorical expreſſions, by way of illuſtration or ornament, muſt be taken from receiv'd notions; but they are not therefore aſſerted in the philoſophical ſenſe by him who uſeth them, any more than the hiſtorical truth of parables and ſimilitudes is ſuppos'd to be aſſerted. Jenkins *of the reaſonableneſs and certainty of the chriſtian religion.*

This excellent author obſerves afterwards, that excepting the inſtances wherein the ſcriptures ſpeak of the riſing and ſetting of the ſun, and of the earth's being at reſt; which manner of expreſſion is and ever will be in uſe according to the vulgar conception in all countries and languages, notwithſtanding any philoſophical diſcoveries, he knows nothing in the ſcriptures which is not conſiſtent with the preſent notions of philoſophy. *p.* 211, 212.

1. It being the great end of God in all his actions to inſtruct intelligent beings in the knowledge of him, and the motives of obedience to him; we think the method of his forming things in a ſucceſſive order, was more ſubſervient to this end, than if he had perfected his work all at once. As to intelligent beings of a ſuperior order, tho' for that reaſon their knowledge is more comprehenſive, and their apprehenſions of things more eaſy and quick; yet as their capacities are limited, and it is evident from their having a deſire to *look into ſome things* *, that the works of God are made known to them in a certain order, it is reaſonable to believe, that they might have had a more clear, diſtinct, and perfect idea of the divine wiſdom, when the progreſs of it in the diſpoſition of things was laid gradually before them, than if the ſeveral parts of this regular and beautiful ſtructure had been put together at once, or at the very inſtant when the matter of it was created. As he who ſees the ſeveral threads, and the order according to which they are diſpos'd and mov'd in a loom, will have a better idea of the art employ'd in working any curious piece, than he who only takes a general view of it when finiſh'd. And the more diſtinct grounds the angels had towards comprehending the wiſdom of God in the order of his works, the motives to love, to honour, and obey him, muſt ſtill have appear'd to them more powerful and engaging.

If there be any force in this reaſon with reſpect to the angels, *who excel in knowledge*, it muſt neceſſarily hold ſtronger for the ſucceſſive formation of things, when we conſider man, as another order of beings, for whoſe ſake the viſible world was deſignedly, if not principally form'd. But indeed there are ſome conſiderations peculiar to the ſtate of man, and which particularly affect the *Jews*, which may induce us to conclude, that God had very wiſe ends in the order of the creation, as related by *Moſes*.

Men have been in all ages too prone to idolatry; and obſerving that the benefits, which ſo much contribute to the comfort and happineſs of human life, are ſenſibly owing to the influence of the heavenly bodies, they too naturally made them the objects of their religious worſhip. As a caution, founded upon more expreſs and diſtinct grounds, againſt this kind of idolatry, it was wiſely contriv'd, and for that reaſon recorded, that the ſun and moon, with all the hoſt of heaven, were made in ſuch a ſtated order, and at ſuch a particular time. This ſerv'd as an expreſs and ſtanding memorial to remind them, that the heavenly orbs, whatever benefits they receiv'd by their influence, were no gods, but only the creatures of that true and eternal God, who made the heavens. Nay to ſhew, however beneficial the influence of thoſe heavenly bodies is at preſent to mankind; yet that it was not originally neceſſary to produce the fruits of the earth, and that God can ſtill by his power, if he pleaſes, fructify the earth without them, it is obſervable, that he caus'd the earth to *bring forth graſs, the herb yielding ſeed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit, after his kind, on the third day*, before he had form'd either ſun, moon, or ſtars, which were the work of the fourth day. The reaſon of theſe precautions againſt idolatry is viſible, with reſpect to mankind in general, who might by any means come to know the hiſtory of the creation, either by ſome traditionary account of it, or from the books of *Moſes*; but the wiſdom of God in them is more eſpecially conſpicuous in relation to the *Jews*; among whom, by his peculiar favour, the true religion was to be preſerv'd; and who were, notwithſtanding, ſo apt to throw off their dependence on him, and follow after ſtrange gods. This very conſideration might probably give ground to that pious maxim of the holy penman. *As for the gods of the heathen, they are but idols; but the Lord made the heavens.* Conformable to which ſentiment are the words of the apoſtle. *We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other gods but one. For though there be many that are call'd gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many and lords many;) yet to us there is but one God, the father of whom are all things.*

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* 1 *Pet.* 1. 12.

2. GOD might think fit to erect this ſcheme of things, in the ſpace of time mention'd by *Moſes*, with regard to the inſtitution of the ſabbath. It being ſo often aſſign'd in ſcripture as the formal cauſe of his ſanctifying the ſabbath, that he reſted in it from all his works, which he had created and made. Now if it was reaſonable, in the nature of the thing, that one day in ſeven ſhould be appropriated as holy to God, in memory of the creation; it was equally reaſonable, that the world ſhould have been created and form'd in ſix days: Otherways God had aſſign'd a proper reaſon for the inſtitution of the ſabbath, which yet in itſelf did not really ſubſiſt. Human reaſon could not perhaps have determin'd preciſely, and after an inconteſtable manner, why one day in ſeven, rather than in ſix or eight, ſhould have been appointed as ſacred to religious uſes; but it being fit that there ſhould be a particular deſignation of ſome day to this end, whoſe returns ſhould neither be too frequent, nor at too great a diſtance. Even in a human way of judging, it muſt be granted, that there are equal grounds at leaſt for appropriating one day in ſeven, as for the appropriation of any other day, in a given number, to the more

ſolemn worſhip and ſervice of God. But the wiſdom of God, in particularly appointing that day, anſwers all arguments to the contrary; he might have good reaſons for ſuch an inſtitution, which do not appear, or not in a clear and ſufficient light to us: Or if it were perfect matter of indifference, what day in any given number ſhould have been ſanctify'd, his ſole authority might have determin'd the day, without any other reaſon.

3. It has been farther urg'd as a probable argument why God, when he made the world, did not bring all things to perfection in it at once, that the creation of man being his finiſhing work, and deſign'd more peculiarly to promote his * honour and glory, the previous diſpoſition of things before man was created, tended to make way for his reception, and introduce him upon the ſtage of the world, whereof he was to be the viſible Lord, with greater magnificence and ſolemnity. I need not obſerve how this method of the divine wiſdom had likewiſe a direct tendence to ſerve the ends of piety and religion, by giving man a more juſt idea of the dignity of his nature; by awakening in him a greater horror of mind, upon the thoughts of his doing any thing to vilify or debaſe it; or whereby he might offend that God, who had done ſo great things for him, and in ſo very ſolemn and diſtinguiſhing a manner.

What I am to enquire, in the laſt place, is, how, or after what manner, God proceeded in forming this admirable ſyſtem of things? For, in reſpect to creation ſtrictly underſtood, as it imports, that the matter whereof things are ſeverally compos'd, was originally produc'd out of nothing, there can, I think, be no queſtion of its having been inſtantaneous. For when God commanded that the ſubject matter of all things ſhould exiſt, there being nothing either to oppoſe his command, or to retard the execution of it, whatever it extended to, muſt, for that reaſon, immediately have exiſted. Beſides, there being no medium between non-exiſtence and a ſtate of exiſtence, it cannot poſſibly be conceiv'd, how any thing, which did not exiſt before, ſhould be brought gradually into being; or, what is much to the ſame purpoſe, how matter, to which extenſion is eſſential, could partly be, and partly not be extended, at the ſame time.

If it be ſaid, that tho' every particle of matter, which was created, muſt, for theſe reaſons, have been immediately created; yet it does not follow, but that God might create the ſeveral parts of it in a ſucceſſive order. 'Tis ſufficient to anſwer, that God always

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* *He hath created us for his glory, he hath form'd us for himſelf, that we ſhould ſhew forth his praiſe.* Iſaiah 43. 7, 21.

effects his deſigns by the moſt ſimple and comprehenſive means, where there are not good reaſons, with reſpect to the ends he propoſes, why he ſhould employ more means, or more time in effecting them, than would have been otherways abſolutely neceſſary.

Now tho' we have given ſome very probable reaſons, why the world was gradually form'd, and in a ſucceſſive order; yet there appears no reaſon, from the ends which God can be ſuppos'd to have had in creating matter, why the parts of it, before they were to receive any regular form or order, ſhould have been created after the ſame manner. What I here obſerve, ſeems highly agreeable to the ſentiment of the wiſe ſon of *Syrach*. *He that liveth for ever created all things in general* *; or rather, as the original might have been properly render'd, promiſcuouſly, or in common. Upon which principle, the pretence of their being created in a diſtinct and ſucceſſive order, is evidently deſtroy'd.

Yet the queſtion which I am principally to ſpeak to, is, whether, when once the matter of the world was prepar'd, God gave the ſeveral parts of it their proper form, by an immediate effect of his power; or according to certain mechanical laws of motion, which by a neceſſary cauſality would one time or other produce it? The anſwer to this will appear under the next chapter, to which I now proceed.

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Chap. IV.

Againſt the mechanical hypotheſis of Carteſius.

I Do not here ſuppoſe that the celebrated author of this hypotheſis had the leaſt intention to ſay any thing, which might favour the cauſe of atheiſm. Yet his principles, were it not for his ſuppoſing it neceſſary that God ſhould have put matter originally in motion, ſeem to refine ſo ingeniouſly upon the *Epicurean* ſyſtem, that perſons atheiſtically diſpos'd, or inclin'd to embrace that ſyſtem, may too eaſily make an ill uſe of them.

I am not here in a proper place for a ſtrict examination of that fine eſſay, which *Carteſius* has left us of his wit upon this ſubject; rather than of his prudence as a chriſtian, or of his penetration and judgment as a philoſopher. I ſhall therefore ſatisfy my ſelf with making ſome general reflections, that may ſerve to obviate any arguments injurious to religion or ſound philoſophy, that may be drawn from his hypotheſis. And,

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* *Ecclus* 18. 1.

1. I would obſerve, that the power of God is more viſible, and apt to make much ſtronger impreſſions upon the mind, when we conceive him forming any conſiderable part of the world by an immediate command, than when the formation of it is only the reſult of a long and neceſſary chain of cauſes, even tho' we caſt our eyes forward till we diſcover the firſt link of it in his hand. The remark of *Longinus*, that *Moſes* ſpake after a manner becoming the majeſty of God, when he repreſented him as producing all things by the ſole power of his word, was founded on the ſame conſideration. But we need not appeal to the authority of learned and judicious men in the caſe. Every man of an ordinary capacity may be ſenſible how much more awakening our apprehenſions of the divine power muſt needs be, when we are told, God only ſaid, *Let it be, and it was ſo; ſpake, and things were done; he commanded, and they were created;* than when a philoſopher, how ingenious ſoever, coldly tells us, that God having once put certain particles of matter in motion, all things, in proceſs of time, neceſſarily rang'd themſelves according to the preſent order and ſituation, wherein we now behold them.

2. Tho' ſpecious conjectures might poſſibly be made concerning the formation of the heavenly orbs upon the *Carteſian* principles; yet no account can be given from his laws of mechaniſm, or from any other that can be aſſign'd, of the conſtruction of plants or animals, much leſs of the origin and operations of life in them. But,

3. It is falſe even to ſay, that the formation of the inanimate parts of the world can be accounted for upon the mechanical hypotheſis of *Carteſius*; tho' we ſhould ſuppoſe it true with reſpect to the number, ſize, and figure of his reſpective elements. Becauſe it has been demonſtrated by the beſt modern philoſophers, that not only gravitation, but the impulſe of one body upon another (both which principles are neceſſary towards forming the inanimate parts of the world) cannot ariſe from any inherent affections of matter, but muſt neceſſarily be aſcrib'd to the immediate power and action of God.

4. Upon the mechanical hypotheſis, God cannot properly be ſaid to have created the world, but only to have created the matter or elements, out of which the world, by a natural cauſality, afterwards form'd itſelf into the order it retains at preſent.

5. It is reaſonable to believe, that whatever laws of motion are now eſtabliſh'd by God; yet the world, according to that ſyſtem of it, which at preſent ſubſiſts, muſt have been form'd before thoſe laws could take place, or have any effect. For in that confuſion and diſorder, wherein it is ſuppos'd, the firſt elements of things promiſcuouſly lay, there was ſuch a combination of moving particles obſtructing the courſe of one another, or altering the direction of it, that we cannot poſſibly conceive how they could ever diſengage themſelves ſo, as to move in a manner, or in a line, and with a determinate degree of velocity requiſite to produce the ſeveral and wonderful effects attributed to them: Effects, which could not have appear'd more regular or uſeful, had the motions neceſſary to produce them really been, upon our principles, directed by infinite wiſdom. At preſent indeed we know, in ſome caſes, how bodies act upon one another, and what effects, when they are in ſuch a ſituation, or of ſuch a magnitude, they will produce. But were they out of the ſtate they are now in, all the grounds of our judging concerning their reciprocal influences and operations from ſenſible experience, would ceaſe. And we ſhould be as much at a loſs to know, how one body could affect, or communicate motion to another, as how motion could be originally communicated to any body. When the ſeveral parts of a watch are put together, we know, they will move in a certain order. But it will not follow from any laws of mechaniſm, which can be conceiv'd or admitted, that thoſe parts could either have been ſeparately form'd, or have afterwards produc'd ſuch a regular machine, without the direction of ſome artiſt. It is more unconceivable how this glorious frame of things could have been compos'd upon any principles purely mechanical; tho' it ſhould be granted, what appears alſo falſe from the phænomena of gravitation, and the reciprocal action of bodies, that it is now preſerv'd by the laws of mechaniſm.

6. But the greateſt danger from the mechanical hypotheſis concerning the formation of things, is upon a religious account. The ſtructure of thoſe ſeveral parts which compoſe the world, being repreſented in ſcripture, as the immediate effect of God's will, and in order to impreſs on our minds a more lively and awful ſenſe of his power; what wiſe or pious end could men have in attempting to account for the origin of it by any other method; tho' it were granted they might poſſibly to that end, hit upon ſuch a philoſophical ſcheme, as would bear a ſtrict examination: Seeing there are few ſubjects of natural philoſophy, which, if men will purſue their enquiries after them, do not afford ſufficient ſcope for the fineſt wit to employ, and the moſt comprehenſive understanding

ing to exhauſt itſelf upon; without advancing ſuch things, as either tend to invalidate the truth, or leſſen the force of any religious principle.

BUT when attempts of this kind appear, even upon a reaſonable and philoſophical enquiry, to be form'd upon a falſe foundation; when we are farther convinc'd by authority of the ſcriptures themſelves, that there is no other way of accounting for the production of things, but by attributing it to the immediate power and wiſdom of God; it is not eaſy to determine, whether the vanity or the impiety of men be really greater, in pretending to draw up a particular proceſs of the manner, wherein the ſeveral parts of the world were form'd without the divine interpoſition. We may therefore piouſly believe it to have been providentially deſign'd, (towards diſcountenancing any ſuch vain and impious eſſay of human wit or curioſity) that there are certain problems, relating to the formation of the world in the holy ſcriptures, moſt proper to obviate all pretences of accounting for it, from any known laws of mechaniſm.

To this end, particularly, there are many expoſtulations in the book of *Job*. In the thirty eighth chapter, God is repreſented as demanding of man *, what anſwer he is able to give to the queſtions, there propos'd, concerning the origin and formation of things. *Where waſt thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? Declare if thou haſt underſtanding, who hath laid the meaſures thereof, if thou knoweſt? Or who hath ſtretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof faſtned? Or who laid the corner-ſtone thereof* †? *Who hath given him a charge over the earth? Or who hath diſpoſed the whole world* ‡? *Who hath enjoin'd him his way? Remember thou magnify his work, which men behold; every man may ſee it; man may behold it afar off* **. *Whence then*, ſays he, upon his contemplating the works of God in another place, *cometh wiſdom?* or the knowledge of natural cauſes and effects, for that is the principal ſubject of his enquiry; *and where is the place of underſtanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living. God underſtandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and ſeeth under the whole heaven. To make the weight for the winds, and he weigheth the waters by meaſure. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder. Then did he ſee it, and declare it: He prepared it; yea, and ſearched it out* ††. There occur frequent paſſages in ſcripture to the ſame effect; but I ſhall ſatisfy my ſelf by concluding this head with the words of an inſpir'd writer, whoſe knowledge of natural cauſes, was the moſt conſummate, and of the greateſt extent of any man's, conſider'd as ſuch, that ever appear'd in the world. *I beheld*, ſays he, *all the work of God, that a man cannot find the work that is even done under the ſun: Becauſe tho' a man labour to ſeek it out; yet he ſhall not find it; yea, farther, tho' a wiſe man ſeek to know it; yet he ſhall not be able to find it* *.

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* ℣. 3. † ℣. 4, 5, 6, ‡ Ch. 34. 13. ** Ch. 36. 23, 24, 25.
†† Ch. 28. 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

Chap. V.

Of intelligent and immaterial beings: And, firſt, Of angels.

An angel, in the proper ſignification of the word, does not diſtinctly import the nature of any being, but only the office to which it is appointed, eſpecially in the way of meſſage, or entercourſe between God and his creatures. In the holy ſcriptures therefore angels are call'd the *miniſters of God, which do his pleaſure* †; and *miniſtring ſpirits ſent forth to miniſter for them, who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation* ‡. Under the name of angels, are here comprehended all thoſe glorious ſpirits, which ſtand before the throne of God, expecting to receive and execute his orders, of what degree ſoever in the ſcale of intelligent beings, whether they be *Thrones*, *Principalities*, *Powers*, *or Dominions* **. According to the large and popular acceptation of the word, one man employ'd to execute any good or pious deſign in favour of another, is ſaid to be as an angel of God to him. Nay, perſons by order, or in purſuance of ſome ſpecial commiſſion from their ſuperiors, even in this life, are expreſſly ſtyl'd angels ††. Tho' the word is, in a more peculiar manner, apply'd in the ſcriptures to ſignify thoſe, who are deputed to tranſact with mankind in the name, and by a ſpecial deſignation of God. The ‡‡ biſhops of the *Aſian* churches are call'd angels in this more eminent ſenſe. In a large and improper ſenſe, even things inanimate may be ſo term'd, when God interpoſes by a more viſible or immediate power, in the direction of them. Tho' I think the inſtance produc'd from the hundred and fourth [‡] pſalm to ſavour this ſenſe, will not hold good. For tho' the words may literally, and perhaps, as they ſtand in relation to the context, bear it; yet as they are apply'd in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews* to intelligent beings of an order ſuperior to man, and in a way of ſtrict argumentation, they cannot be reaſonably interpreted to ſignify the winds, but properly theſe intelligent beings, in the immediate and direct intention of them.

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* *Eccleſ.* 8. 17. † *Pſal.* 103. 21. ‡ *Heb.* 1. 14. ** *Col.* 1. 16.

†† *Iſaiah* 33. 7. *Luke* 7. 24. ‡‡ *Rev.* 2. 1, 8, 12, 18.—3. 1, 7, 14.

As to the exiſtence of angels, there can be no grounds of diſputing it to thoſe, who do not diſpute the divine authority of the ſcriptures. For tho' 'tis commonly ſuppos'd, that the *Sadducees*, who believ'd the *Pentateuch* (wherein expreſs mention is made of the appearance of angels) to be divinely reveal'd, nevertheleſs deny'd their exiſtence: Yet this cenſure, ſo far at leaſt as it is grounded upon ſcripture, concerning the opinion of that ſect, may perhaps, upon examination, ſeem too harſh and rigid. It is not neceſſary we ſhould infer from their ſaying, *there is neither angel nor ſpirit* [*], that they deny'd their exiſtence, but only their appearance at that time, or perhaps for ſome ages before. In oppoſition to which error, the *Phariſees*, who believ'd that angels or other ſpirits ſtill continu'd to appear, argued in defence of St. *Paul*, *we find no evil in this man; but if an angel or ſpirit hath ſpoken to him, let us not fight againſt God* [†].

OTHERS have thought, that tho' the *Sadducees* believ'd the hiſtory of *Moſes*; yet they might conſider the appearance of angels recorded in it, not as an argument of their having a proper and diſtinct ſubſiſtence, but only of their ſubſiſting for the time in the nature of certain qualities and affections by the ſole power of God, reſum'd again into his eſſence, when the ends for which they appear'd, were effected. This notion is not only inconceivable, but directly repugnant to the perfections of the divine nature. To attribute perſonal actions to mere modes or qualities; to ſay, for inſtance, that a being that has no diſtinct ſubſiſtence, ſhould go and return upon any meſſage, ſhould aſcend and deſcend, ſhould ſpeak, ſhould refreſh itſelf and be comforted, is to ſay, what we can form no poſſible conception of. But could we poſſibly conceive, that any qualities attributed to ſpirits might really exiſt, without a ſubject, as ſome have ſuppos'd thoſe accidents may, which are proper to bodies; yet when any evil ſpirit, under what form ſoever, is ſaid in ſcripture to have appear'd; to aſcribe the operations of ſuch a ſpirit, however they ſubſiſted, to the ſole and immediate power of God, is entirely to deſtroy the perfect holineſs of his nature, and to make him directly the author of ſin, in a ſenſe, which it would be impoſſible for the wit of man to conteſt or evade. If the *Sadducees* therefore really believ'd the divine inſpiration of the *Pentateuch*, they muſt, whatever they pretended, have believ'd angels, from the appearances and operations of them mention'd in it, as beings, that had a diſtinct and perſonal ſubſiſtence. But if they deny'd the *Moſaick* writings to be of divine authority, then no arguments can be drawn from their opinion, in prejudice to what we aſſert from the authority of thoſe writings.

[‡] ℣. 4.

[*] *Acts* 23. 8.

[†] 23. 9.

We can only form probable conjectures, at beſt, from any light, which natural reaſon affords concerning the number of angels; yet conſidering the vaſt extent of the univerſe, the innumerable worlds which compoſe it, (and, for any thing we know to the contrary, habitable worlds) there are probable grounds to ſuppoſe, that the number of angels is in ſome meaſure proportion'd to the variety of the ſpecial affairs or orders, which are given them in charge. The ſchoolmen have aſſign'd another reaſon, why the angelical orders are very numerous, which I ſhall barely propoſe, and leave to the judgment of the reader. They argue then, that as in the material ſyſtem, things which are more perfect are of the greater magnitude, as the heavens, which are of a pure and unmixt nature, vaſtly exceed in magnitude the inferior and more groſs parts of the univerſe; ſo it is but reaſonable, that the more perfect intelligent beings are, they ſhould exceed thoſe, which are leſs perfect in multitude.

But the beſt and only certain argument, we can make in the caſe, is from the authority of the holy ſcriptures, which aſſure us, that *thouſand thouſands* of intelligences *miniſter unto God, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand ſtand before him* *. That *the chariots of God are twenty thouſand, even thouſands of angels* †. And that, not to multiply texts to this purpoſe, *the number of them is ten thouſand times ten thouſand, and thouſands of thouſands* ‡. Which words, tho' they import a definite number; yet, according to the phraſeology of ſcripture, and ordinarily of other writings, may be apply'd, and were, without doubt, intended to ſignify, a number indefinite; or perhaps, to human conception in particular, really innumerable.

But what falls chiefly under our conſideration in reference to theſe intelligent beings, are their intellectual powers; their ſuperiority to man, who was made a little lower than the angels, ſuppoſes them of a more comprehenſive knowledge, and unerring judgment. This is what we may alſo argue from that juſt and beautiful gradation of the apoſtle. *Tho' I could ſpeak with the tongue of men and of angels, and underſtood all myſteries, and all knowledge* [*]. There are ſome things, notwithſtanding, which the angels *deſire to look into,* and muſt therefore be ſuppos'd ignorant of them, at leaſt in part: Tho' as to the determinate time of the day of judgment eſpecially, they are wholly ignorant. Neither do they certainly know, in what diſpoſition the hearts of thoſe, even to whom they miniſter, really are. From the knowledge of our good or evil principles, of our natural temper, or the power of thoſe habits which we have contracted, they may judge with great probability from the circumſtances we are under in theſe reſpects, how we are inclin'd, and which way we ſhall take; but ſtill the ſecret motions of the heart, in working a true converſion, or in ſeparating us to a greater diſtance from God, are known only to himſelf; and for this reaſon, in particular, becauſe he only knows in what meaſure or degree, that grace has been diſpens'd to us, which is neceſſary to our converſion, or to prevent our farther apoſtaſy. When it is therefore ſaid, *there is joy in the preſence of the angels of God over one ſinner, that repenteth* [†], the meaning is not, that the angels report the ſincerity of a ſinner's converſion to God, on which occaſion that joy ariſes; but God, in whoſe preſence they are, is pleas'd to communicate the knowledge of a ſinner's converſion to them.

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* *Dan.* 7. 10. † *Pſalm* 68. 17. ‡ *Rev.* 2. 11.

WITH reſpect to the ordinary method, whereby angels come to the perception and knowledge of things, whether by certain ſpecies, or images of them, according to which they are repreſented to their minds, or by immediate intuition, or by ſeeing the exemplary reaſons of them in the divine nature? Whether, again, angels know the relations of things, and make a judgment of them, by way of diſcourſe, or of inferring one thing from another, or by a clear and diſtinct view of the relations of all things diſcoverable to them, at once? Whether their manner of conceiving things be purely intellectual, and even when ſenſible beings are the objects of their thoughts, without ſenſation? Theſe being queſtions of more ſubtilty than uſe, and requiring a nice and particular examination, I ſhall not inſiſt upon them. It is equally indifferent to the ends of religion on which ſide we determine the queſtions relating to the motions of theſe ſpiritual beings, or the manner of their exiſting in place. As if, for inſtance, they may be properly ſaid to move locally; or if they do, whether their motion be always perform'd in a continued ſucceſſion, or there may not be certain and very long intervals, through which they do not really paſs, in ſhifting the ſcene of their reſidence or action? Whether, again, their motion, if continually ſucceſſive, yet is not gradual, but inſtantaneous? The queſtions after what man- they are preſent in place, are no leſs curious and abſtruſe. As when it is ask'd, if two, or any other number of angels, for the ſame reaſon, may not be in one individual place at the ſame time? If they are circumſcrib'd with reſpect to their ſubſtance, or only with reſpect to the extent of their power and influence? Thoſe who would amuſe themſelves with ſuch nice enquiries, may find ſcope enough for their entertainment, in the lucubrations of the ſchoolmen.

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[*] 1 *Cor.* 13. 1. [†] *Luke* 15. 10.

It is a queſtion of a ſpeculative nature, which yet deſerves, on a religious account, to be more diſtinctly conſider'd, whether angels can really aſſume and inform bodies, or only in appearance? Becauſe the ſcriptures having repreſented them, as appearing in a viſible and human form, ſhould it be ſuppos'd, that their appearance was purely viſionary, like thoſe things which occur to the imagination in a dream or a phrenzy, this would tend not only to impair the credit and authority of the ſcriptures, but alſo the teſtimony of our ſenſes in other caſes. Eſpecially if we conſider, that the appearances of angels mention'd in the inſpir'd writings, were ſometimes made to ſeveral perſons at the ſame time. For tho' 'tis poſſible, that a ſingle perſon, by means of a diſturb'd imagination, may be ſo far impos'd upon, as to think, that he ſees or hears, what he really does not ſee or hear; yet if we could ſuppoſe ſeveral perſons, without any natural defect, to be ſo impos'd upon at the ſame time, there could be no certain grounds for crediting the report of the moſt evident and beſt atteſted facts. Should it be ſaid, for inſtance, * that two angels appear'd to a a man of character and diſtinction, ſitting in the gate of a city; that he roſe up to meet them, and bowed himſelf before them; that upon his importuning them to tarry with him all night, they went into his houſe, and *eat of the feaſt, which he had prepared for them*. The incredulous might perhaps object, that even wiſe and good men are ſubject at ſome times to illuſions of fancy, and ſtrange diſorders of the brain. But ſhould a number of men in that city afterwards come together in a tumultuous manner to demand, that the two perſons which had appear'd in the form of angels, ſhould be brought out to them. Should thoſe angels, in defence of the perſon, who had entertain'd them, viſibly *put forth their hands, and pull him into the houſe to them, and ſhut to the door*; theſe are circumſtances, to recite no other, wherein if the ſenſes of men may be deceiv'd, there can be no arguing from the teſtimony of ſenſe, in any caſe.

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* *Gen.* 19. 3.

Angels are not only intellectual, but voluntary agents; and indeed without a power of willing the object of their underſtanding, and of uniting themſelves to it, ſo far as they apprehend it to be good, we cannot well conceive, either to what wiſe or good ends their underſtanding was given them. For where could be the happineſs of intelligent minds in a naked and careleſs contemplation of things, without any capacity of choice or deſire towards them?

But what ſtill contributes more to the perfection of theſe ſpiritual beings, is, that the acts of their choice are free with regard to the objects propos'd to them. So that they can poſtpone or prefer, fly from, or embrace them at pleaſure. A great number of them, by making an ill uſe of this liberty in their firſt and probationary ſtate, apoſtatiz'd from God, and thereby gave riſe to the diſtinction of good and bad angels. But as I am to enquire wherein the freedom of will properly conſiſts, and what principles it is to be reſolv'd into, when I come to conſider the nature of man, I ſhall ſay nothing more of it in this place: Except on occaſion of my obſerving, that one argument has been advanc'd againſt the freedom of will in angels, which peculiarly affects them, and not in common with men. It is ſaid then, that freedom of choice pre-ſuppoſes conſultation about the reaſonableneſs or propriety of the thing to be choſen; and where in conſulting, the judgment is not ſubject to error, the will muſt be unavoidably determin'd to follow the direction of it: For it is plain, that the errors of our choice generally, at leaſt, proceed from our judging amiſs, and our being impos'd upon by appearances and fictions inſtead of the true nature of things.

Now angels being ſuppos'd to know the properties and ſeveral relations of things by an act of ſimple intelligence, without formally laying down certain premiſes, or drawing concluſions from them, they cannot, for that reaſon, judge, nor therefore, according to the tenour of this argument, poſſibly chuſe amiſs; or indeed chuſe any thing, but what they are invincibly directed and determin'd in the choice of.

This argument proceeds upon a ſuppoſition without proof, and which is probably falſe; namely, that they know all things perfectly, which are preſented to their minds, by ſimple and immediate intuition. But ſhould this be granted true with reſpect to the knowledge of particular objects; yet there are no good grounds to believe, that they perfectly comprehend, in one view, the ſeveral relations, wherein things reciprocally ſtand; but come gradually to the knowledge of them in the ordinary method of ratiocination and diſcourſe; and may therefore, eſpecially where thoſe relations are much complicated, or very abſtruſe, poſſibly err in their judgments concerning them, for the ſame reaſons of negligence or inadvertency that men do; and one error admitted, if argued from by a juſt deduction of conſequences, will prepare the way for the introducing any error.

This argument ſuppoſes farther, that the will neceſſarily follows the light and laſt deciſion of the underſtanding; which ſuppoſition, if true, will not, as I ſhall afterwards ſhew, when I come to conſider the faculties of human mind, deſtroy the freedom of the will in the proper ſenſe of liberty.

I may add, that what has been objected, lies againſt a known and acknowledg'd fact. Whatever the queſtion may be concerning the freedom of will in angels, now that they are in a confirm'd ſtate of reward or puniſhment; yet in their native and original ſtate, they were certainly capable either of making a wrong judgment, or of acting contrary to a true judgment. If the good angels therefore are not at preſent free to acts of malice, nor the evil angels to thoſe of charity, this proceeds from a juſt retribution of God, in conſequence of the good or ill uſe they formerly made of their liberty; which is ſtill, notwithſtanding, radically in them, tho', for the reaſon here mention'd, they do not actually exert it.

The queſtion, in the next place, ariſes concerning the reſpective offices of the good or evil angels; eſpecially as they ſtand in relation to God and man, and are either employ'd in the execution of any good, or permitted to act any ill deſigns.

The proper buſineſs of thoſe angels, who preſerv'd the rectitude and dignity of their nature, and continued faithful in their obedience to God, is to ſtand before his throne; to do glory to him in ſolemn acts of praiſe and adoration; and, at his command, readily to execute the orders of it, whether in heaven, or upon earth.

As their charge extends to men, they may be ſaid to act either by virtue of an extraordinary commiſſion, or of a more common and ſtanding office. Sometimes by a ſpecial appointment, they have appear'd in a viſible form, and ſpoken with an audible and articulate voice. In order either to reveal * ſome promiſe, com-

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* *Gen.* 18. 17, 18, 19. *Judg.* 13. 3, 4, 5. *Mat.* 1. 20, 21.

mand, or doctrine; or to caution good men againſt [*] ſome imminent danger; or to reprove [†] the ſins of wicked men, and even the failure of good men; or to [‡] atteſt and confirm certain facts; or, laſtly, to [**] comfort and ſupport the faithful in a ſtate of tryal and adverſity; in which latter inſtance, they had a more peculiar charge with reſpect to the [††] perſon of our bleſſed Saviour.

BUT tho' the appearance of angels in executing theſe or the like commiſſions, is now generally, if not univerſally ceas'd; there are certain [‡‡] ordinary and ſtanding offices which they ſtill continue to perform inſenſibly for us, either in their being the occaſion of repreſenting things in a clearer light to our underſtanding, or of influencing in one degree or other our affections. After what manner theſe ſuperior intelligences can operate upon our minds, or excite our paſſions, at leaſt occaſion them to be excited without our being ſenſible of any impulſe from them, is a queſtion, which will equally lie againſt the operations of the Spirit of God; who has perhaps deſignedly conceal'd the manner, how other ſpirits affect us, from our notice; becauſe he would govern us by the motives of a reaſonable faith, and not by the irreſiſtible teſtimonies of ſenſe, and inward conſciouſneſs.

THE office of evil angels, and which they execute with the greateſt ſedulity imaginable is, on the other hand, to corrupt and ſeduce us. The method they take to this end, is either by repreſenting the nature and relations of things in a falſe light to the underſtanding, or by propoſing ſuch objects to the mind, as may be moſt proper to entertain and defile the imagination; for that is the main ſource both of all our errors and diſorders: Eſpecially when we are under circumſtances of temptation, which theſe evil ſpirits know too well to improve the force of, either from our natural temper, or any corrupt habit we have contracted. As to our being inſenſible of their influence or action upon our minds, there is this peculiar conſideration, why, by a wiſe appointment of God, we ſhould be ſo. Becauſe when we are tempted, at the inſtigation of the devil, to commit any ſin, were we actually to feel him prompting us to it, this would create ſo great horror of mind, that none but thoſe who are already corrupted to the laſt degree, or might be willing to enter into a formal contract with him, could be capable of complying with his ſuggeſtions. And in this caſe indeed our flying from them would not be what God would have it, a proper act of choice or virtue, but the effect of a natural and invincible reluctance.

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[*] *Gen.* 19. 12, 13, 14. *Mat.* 2. 13.

[†] *Numb.* 22. 22. *Gen.* 19. 11. *Luke* 1. 20.

[‡] *Mat.* 28. 5, 6, 7. *Acts* 1. 10, 11. *Luke* 1. 13.

[**] *Gen.* 16. 7. *Judg.* 6. 13, 14. *Dan.* 3. 25. *Acts* 27. 23, 24.

[††] *Mat.* 4. 11. *Luke* 22. 43. *Pſalm* 91. 11, 12.

[‡‡] *Pſalm* 104. 4. *Heb.* 1. 7. *Mat.* 18. 10. 1 *Cor.* 11. 10. *Heb.* 1. 14.

I do not think it neceſſary to enter upon a confutation of thoſe, who would interpret what is ſaid of the devil, and his arts of tempting men in the ſcriptures, as if they were to be underſtood only in a figurative ſenſe, and imported no more, than the natural motions of concupiſcence, or the power of ſome evil habits. If ſuch a forc'd conſtruction may be put on thoſe paſſages of holy writ, which ſpeak of the *old ſerpent, call'd the devil and ſatan* *, *the prince and chief of the devils* †, and of his working *with all power, and ſigns, and lying wonders; and with all deceivableneſs in them that periſh* ‡; then there is no reveal'd truth which we can be oblig'd to explain or believe in a literal ſenſe. Beſides, there are ſome ſins ſo ſhocking in themſelves to human nature, and yet ſometimes committed with ſo many aggravating circumſtances, that, out of reſpect to the common ſentiments and ingenuity of mankind, we ought not to ſuppoſe any perſon capable of them, but through the inſtigation of that evil ſpirit, *who ſtill works in the children of diſobedience* **.

There ariſes but one queſtion more, which I think proper to ſay ſomething to, upon this head: And that is, whether every perſon has a particular angel continually to guard and attend him? The arguments brought from ſcripture to ſupport the affirmative, ſeem very inconcluſive. One of them cited to this purpoſe, is from the goſpel of St. *Matthew*, where our Saviour, ſpeaking of young children, ſays, *their angels do always behold the face of their father, which is in heaven* ††. But this is a falſe way of arguing, ſeeing thoſe, who are here call'd little ones, are not to be ſo underſtood with reſpect to their infancy, but their late converſion. By a like metaphor, as when we are exhorted to *be children in malice, but in underſtanding to be men.* For as to the point of ſcandal, which is the thing our Lord is ſpeaking to, children are not properly the objects of it. Or if by offence, in this place, we are to underſtand any ill uſage or treatment of children, all that can be inferr'd from the words, is, that in caſes of ſuch violence offer'd to them, they are under the protection of certain holy angels, charg'd by God with ſpecial orders to that end. But this neither proves, that thoſe angels continually attend upon them, and from the time, as is ſuppos'd, of their birth; or that every one of them has always for his protector the ſame particular angel. If we may judge from other paſſages of ſcripture,

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* *Rev.* 12. 9, 10. † *Luke* 11. 15. ‡ 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 9. ** *Epheſ.* 2. 2.
†† *Mat.* 18. 10.

pture, it is reaſonable to conclude, that the good offices of angels, as their very name imports; are not unintermitted, but occaſional, and on particular exigences. It is farther urg'd, that when *Peter* was deliver'd by an angel out of priſon, the faithful, upon the report of a maid, that ſhe had ſeen him, ſaid, *It is his angel.* But the moſt we can infer from the words, is, that they were ſpoken according to a common and receiv'd notion at that time among the *Jews*; as the fathers afterwards expreſs'd themſelves; agreeably to the opinion of *Plato*, and other heathen writers, concerning certain points, the truth or falſhood whereof, was of no great importance to the chriſtian faith.

As to the natural reaſon for the appointment of a particular angel to every particular perſon; thoſe who contend for this appointment, have not been able to produce any ſatisfactory proofs to induce our belief of it. It ſeems rather reaſonable, conſidering the dignity of angels, and the extent of their knowledge and capacities, that ſince God never employs more means than are proper to effect his deſigns, that one angel ſhould have the charge over ſeveral perſons. But if any man think he has ſufficient grounds to believe himſelf under the conſtant protection of ſome particular angel, his error, if it really proves ſo, ſeems to be of no very dangerous conſequence to religion, provided he found no ſuperſtitious practice upon it, of invocating his protector, or of doing him any other proper act of religious homage.

CHAP. VI.

Of intelligent and immaterial beings: And, ſecondly, Of men.

AS I here conſider man, with reſpect to the noble and ſuperior powers of his mind, I ſhall ſay very little concerning the formation of his body, the moſt admirable and perfect of all the other viſible works of God, and for the ſcene of whoſe life, ſenſes, and action, we have authority to conclude from * ſcripture, that the reſt of this habitable world was more peculiarly form'd. And I may add of the † planetary and fix'd orbs, that appear to the eye. For which reaſon, the creation of man, with reſpect to his body, as well as his ſoul, is mention'd after a manner highly proper to awaken our attention; and repreſented as a more eſpecial effect of counſel and deliberation. *And God ſaid, Let us make man* *. From which words, ſome have thought, that a plurality of perſons in the unity of the Godhead, might be juſtly inferr'd. But the words upon which any doctrine is eſtabliſh'd, which has no foundation in our natural way of reaſoning, but ſeems rather to bear ſome repugnancy to it, ought to have a very clear and diſtinct ſignification. Much leſs can ſuch a doctrine be deduc'd from any forms of expreſſion, which, according to a uſual way of ſpeaking in like caſes, may naturally bear another ſenſe. Now nothing is more ordinary, than for perſons inveſted with ſovereign authority, to ſpeak in the plural number; eſpecially when they are about to deliver any very important order or command.

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* *Gen.* 1. 28. *Iſaiah* 45. 18. *Pſalm* 8. 6. † *Jer.* 31. 35. *Pſalm* 8. 4, 5.

There is a difficulty relating to the formation of woman, which may be thought to deſerve a more diſtinct conſideration, in order to obviate the cavils of unbelievers againſt the truth of the *Moſaick* hiſtory of the creation; or to ſatisfy the ſcruples of thoſe, who already believe, concerning it. It has been objected, that the rib, taken from the ſide of *Adam*, out of which the body of *Eve* is ſaid to have been form'd, could bear no proportion to it; and if other adventitious parts of matter, and in greater quantity were requir'd to the compoſition of it, her body might moſt properly be ſaid to have been form'd of thoſe parts, which contributed moſt to its ſtructure. 'Tis argued farther, that God in the works of creation could do nothing ſuperfluous or redundant, which yet we cannot ſay, if the rib, whereof the woman was made, had been ſupernumerary in the body of *Adam*, or the make of his body more regular and perfect without it.

But theſe pretended reaſons againſt a fact divinely atteſted, are eaſily anſwer'd. We grant, that the rib, whereof *Eve* was form'd, to have been augmented by additional parts of matter, and in much greater proportion to that end. But yet, as it was the principal and fundamental part to which the augmentation was afterwards made and apply'd, the formation of *Eve* might, with great propriety, be denominated from it. As the † five loaves, which our Saviour diſtributed among the multitude, and the fragments whereof that remain'd fill'd twelve baskets, might, in a proper ſenſe, be call'd the loaves, wherewith they were fed. We grant again, that the rib taken from the ſide of *Adam*, was in his perſonal capacity ſupernumerary: Yet as he was the head of human race, and there might be wiſe reaſons, tho' ſymbolically deſign'd, for compoſing the woman from ſome part of his body; and from that part in particular, to denote the obligations of a ſtricter union and ſociety between them; it was highly agreeable to the divine wiſdom, that in theſe reſpects his body ſhould have been form'd with that part: Which yet was not neceſſary to the perfection of of it, when we conſider him as a ſolitary and individual perſon. This objection, if there be any force in it, will equally lie againſt the wiſdom of God, on account of the ſeminal virtues of plants and animals, which do not ſeparately, or in themſelves conſider'd, add to their perfection, but only in relation of the power of propagating their ſeveral kinds.

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* *Gen.* 1. 26.

† *Mat.* 12. 15.—20, 21.

BUT what I propos'd, as the main ſubject of my preſent enquiry, is the creation of human ſouls, with the proper powers and operations of them. Whether they were all created at once, in order to be united to certain bodies, which ſhould be prepar'd afterwards, in convenient time, for their reception? Or whether they are created at the inſtant when the bodies they are to inform are fit to receive them? are queſtions which have been much controverted. As to the notion of propagating human ſouls by way of traduction, it is ſo inconſiſtent with the ſimplicity of immaterial beings; with our being inſenſible of any ſuch power; and with the abſolute impoſſibility of conceiving it; that this method of accounting for the origin of them, is now, I think, given up by all modern philoſophers.

BUT the arguments which have been produc'd for the pre-exiſtence of ſouls, appear to be more ſpecious, and, in the opinion of ſome of the greateſt men of antiquity, heathen and chriſtian, whom certain moderns of diſtinction in the learned world have follow'd, really concluſive. This doctrine has been the more ſtrenuouſly aſſerted, as it was thought to furniſh the beſt anſwer to the objection of ſceptical or incredulous men, againſt the goodneſs and juſtice of divine providence. I ſhall on this occaſion cite the words of Dr. *More* in his divine dialogues. "Suppoſing human ſouls "were created in the morning of the world, and in ſuch infinite "myriads, there has been time enough ſince that, for as many, "and more, than have hitherto peopled the earth, to have tranſ"greſs'd ſo heinouſly before their entrance on this ſtage, that by "a juſt *Nemeſis*, meaſur'd and modify'd by the divine goodneſs "itſelf, they may be contriv'd into the worſt, and moſt horrid "circumſtances, into the moſt ſqualid and diſadvantagious con"dition, and ſtate of living.

It may be urg'd farther in favour of this doctrine, that the works of creation, ſuppoſing it falſe, were ſo far from being finiſh'd, as the ſcriptures record, on the ſixth day, that, with reſpect to ſome of the nobleſt productions of them, and in the moſt numerous inſtances, they were but then juſt begun: That it is not eaſily reconcileable with the wiſdom of God, and his acting in the moſt ſimple and comprehenſive manner, perpetually, or in a ſucceſſive order, to exert a power, which might, conſiſtently with the ends of his action, have been exerted, ſo as to produce all the effects of it, antecedently at once. It has been thought no leſs repugnant to the holineſs and purity of the divine nature, that God ſhould, by an immediate act of his will, create ſouls, in order to inform bodies, produc'd by the moſt ſinful and impure actions.

But the principal argument for the pre-exiſtence of ſouls, is founded on the queſtion propos'd to our Saviour, whether the man that was born blind had ſinn'd, or his parents? It is agreed, that the *Jews* ſpake here according to a notion, which had at that time commonly obtain'd among them: And which, if it were falſe, or of any dangerous conſequence, our Lord had an occaſion of undeceiving them, that in regard to his prophetical character, we cannot eaſily ſuppoſe he would have neglected to improve.

The arguments, on the other hand, for the production of the ſoul, at the inſtant the body is in a proper diſpoſition to be inform'd by it, are now more generally aſſented to. It is ſaid, the wiſdom of God requir'd, that all beings, when created, ſhould be created in a ſtate of the greateſt perfection proper to them; that the body is a conſtituent part of human nature: And therefore if the ſoul pre-exiſted, man muſt have been originally created in a ſtate of imperfection, and after a manner derogatory to the action of an all-wiſe God. But this way of arguing is of no force to thoſe, who aſſert, that the body is not neceſſary to the perfection of a human ſoul, or, ſtrictly ſpeaking, a conſtituent part of man; but only an occaſional cauſe of certain ſenſations in the ſoul, which it has no natural efficiency to produce: And which therefore God, if he had ſo pleas'd, might have communicated to the ſoul, without uniting it to any body at all. Yet admitting the union of the body neceſſary to produce certain ſenſations in the ſoul, it will not therefore follow, that all intelligent beings, ſuch of them eſpecially, as were to give proof of their obedience in a ſtate of probation, ſhould have all the perfection at the time they were created, whereof they were in every reſpect capable.

It is argued farther againſt the pre-exiſtence of ſouls, that they can only be ſuppos'd to have been united to bodies, (eſpecially upon the preſent ſtage of life) by way of puniſhment. Now puniſhment, it is ſaid, implies, in the reaſon and deſign of it, a conſciouſneſs of the crime, for which we are puniſh'd; whereas there does not at any time appear the leaſt notice or apprehenſion in the ſoul of any thing done by it in a former ſtate. Yet without ſome ſenſibility of the crime for which we ſuffer, the juſtice of God in our ſufferings, will appear purely vindictive, and without thoſe ſalutary reaſons, which he always intends by them in this life. To which it may be anſwer'd, that a diſtinct conſciouſneſs of the crime, for which we ſuffer, does indeed beſt anſwer all the ends of puniſhment; yet ſome of them may be very well anſwer'd, by our knowing in general, that our ſufferings are the effect of our having ſinn'd, tho' we cannot diſtinctly recollect the nature of our ſin; or with what circumſtances it was committed. Otherways God could have no wiſe end in puniſhing men at preſent for ſuch ſins, as they inadvertently contracted the guilt of, or cannot now particularly call to remembrance.

But our Saviour having left this queſtion undetermin'd, when he had ſo fair an opportunity of reſolving it, we are more at liberty to judge of it, as a point of ſpeculation, about which we may, without danger, determine on either ſide, as the reaſons of human probability appear ſtronger.

Chap. VII.

Of human underſtanding and will.

It is of the greateſt concernment to us, that we ſhould form right notions concerning thoſe two powers of a human ſoul, underſtanding and will; which, tho' in order to a more clear conception of them, we may conſider diſtinctly; yet their operations are ſo complicated, or rather united, that we cannot ſuppoſe them faculties really diſtinct. It being the ſame individual mind that ſees, that chuſes or rejects the ſeveral objects preſented to it; and which exerting itſelf in the former reſpect, we call underſtanding, and in the latter, will. Theſe two powers therefore, tho' different in our manner of apprehending and meditating upon them, yet are radically and inſeparably the ſame. The moſt clear and diſtinct apprehenſion we are able to form of them, when ſeparately conſider'd, is this, that the underſtanding is neceſſarily determin'd, in the judgment it makes; but the will, except where the nature of the object requires it ſhould be determin'd, is free in the acts of its choice or refuſal.

When any ſimple object is propos'd to the mind, it neceſſarily ſees it, according to the light wherein it appears, and no otherways. In comparing things together, it neceſſarily perceives their mutual relations, ſo far as they are evident; it doubts, where they appear doubtful; and aſſents to them in the ſame meaſure, as probable, wherein it diſcovers the grounds of their probability. The ſame reaſon of neceſſity holds with reſpect to all other acts of the underſtanding, whether concerning the truth or eligibility of things. Upon which different accounts, a riſe has been given to the diſtinction of its being ſpeculative, and practical. So that whatever queſtion may ariſe concerning the freedom of will, in the acts of its choice, the underſtanding, as ſuch, is neceſſarily determin'd by its objects, in the judgment which it makes of them.

Chap. VIII.

Of the liberty of human will.

The main difficulty, when we conſider the nature of the ſoul, lies in our accounting for that power of it, which we call will; eſpecially, and as in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, it imports freedom of choice. For that has been the great ſubject of controverſy; concerning which, that I may proceed more diſtinctly in my enquiries, I ſhall obſerve the following method.

I. I ſhall examine, wherein freedom of will, in the ſtrict ſenſe of it, properly conſiſts.

II. I ſhall ſhew, that there can be no ſuch thing as moral good or evil, reward or puniſhment; nothing blameable or truly praiſeworthy, without free will, in that ſenſe.

III. I ſhall anſwer ſome of the moſt material objections, that have been made by the fataliſts on the other ſide. And,

I. Free will, according to the notion I have of it, implies a liberty of choice or refuſal, as to ſuch objects, which are repreſented to the mind, under the appearances of good or evil. Yet I own there are two caſes, wherein reaſonable beings neither are, nor can poſſibly be, in this ſenſe, free. The firſt ariſes from a natural, conſtant, and invincible deſire, which they have of being happy. And, in conſequence of this deſire, it is alſo impoſſible for them to chuſe evil, formally conſider'd as evil. But ſtill the fataliſts have no reaſon to object againſt the freedom of the will in general, from the neceſſity of its being determin'd in ſuch particular caſes, where both the goodneſs of God has appointed, and the nature of the thing abſolutely requires, that it ſhould be determin'd. However, as the motion of the will whereby we allow it to be irreſiſtibly carry'd towards good, and in order to avoid evil, as ſuch, is not arbitrary, but neceſſary; man, with reſpect to ſuch a choice or refuſal, is not, ſtrictly ſpeaking, either morally good or evil; or, as will appear in the ſequel, the proper ſubject of puniſhment or reward, of blame or applauſe.

WHEREIN then does that freedom of will, which is the ſubject of our preſent enquiry, and which denominates man a moral agent, properly conſiſt? I anſwer, not in his choice of natural or neceſſary good, in the caſes before mention'd, but in his determining himſelf indifferently in his choice of things morally good or evil; in his doing what he knows fit and reaſonable to be done, or in his neglecting to do it, and committing what he knows, or might, by a due uſe of his faculties, have known, at the ſame time, to be ſinful. For tho' moral good is really in itſelf, and in all the proper conſequences of it, more deſirable than any natural good we can propoſe to our ſelves in contradiſtinction to it; our inclinations, nevertheleſs, have ſo great a power towards blinding the underſtanding, or ſtopping the progreſs of its enquiries, that it will not always ſee or conſider as it ought, the reaſons of ſo juſt a preference. The truth of which aſſertion, with the poſſibility of the fact, I ſhall preſently endeavour to evince. I ſhall only obſerve, by the way, that it is as evident from experience and ſelf-conſciouſneſs, that our wills are free in the ſenſe I am contending for, as it could have been upon a certain and true ſuppoſition of the thing. And what ſtronger proof would we deſire of any thing, than that, ſuppoſing it true, we could not have been more ſenſible of the force and evidence of it?

BUT how is it poſſible, if the will neceſſarily follow the laſt dictate of the underſtanding, that it ſhould be indifferent in its choice; ſince, upon this ſuppoſition, it would be, at the ſame time, free to act, or not to act, and yet act by virtue of a neceſſary and invincible cauſe. Here lies the main difficulty of the queſtion, which I now proceed directly to conſider. And I would obſerve that,

1. It is here taken abſolutely for granted, that the will does follow the laſt dictate of the underſtanding. This, indeed, has been the opinion of ſome ſchoolmen; *Thomas* of *Aquin*, and his followers, who aſſerted the liberty of human will to all the ends and purpoſes of morality, have earneſtly contended for it. But others, and in particular the *ſubtle doctor*, and thoſe of his way, have no leſs ſtrenuouſly oppos'd it; as being attended with ill conſequences towards deſtroying that freedom, which the patrons of it appear'd to admit; and who argued, that except the judgment of the underſtanding precede, there can be properly no choice, or will at all. For the object of the will being ſome intelligible good, real or apparent, if the underſtanding ſhould not previouſly propoſe it, the will would operate without an object. This only proves that we cannot, by any motion of the will, be carry'd towards an object unknown to us. But becauſe the judgment of the underſtanding is previouſly requir'd towards our making a proper choice, it does not neceſſarily follow, that we muſt be oblig'd to make ſuch a choice; ſince we may, notwithſtanding, even tho' all things are rightly diſpos'd for the action of the will, have a power to act, or not to act accordingly. And herein, I take it, principally lies the immorality of the will, that it does not always follow the light, that *candle of the Lord*, as *Solomon* expreſſes it, which is ſet up in the underſtanding, even when it appears moſt bright and irradiating. For there is a wide difference between the incapacity a man is under of chuſing any object, which he has no clear apprehenſion of, and his being oblig'd to chuſe it, in conſequence of ſuch an apprehenſion.

But the will has ſtill a farther influence upon the underſtanding. Inſtead of following the light, as we ought, we may very often be ſaid to go before it. And that is, when we proceed to action without waiting for the full and diſtinct orders of reaſon; when we divert the mind from ſuch enquiries, or ſuſpend any farther purſuit of them, as might, upon a more ſtrict examination, repreſent things in a view, proper to determine our choice of the better part. At other times, when the underſtanding takes a larger ſcope in conſulting and deliberating; yet there is frequently ſuch a ſtrong byaſs caſt upon it towards one ſide, that it cannot carry on its purſuits in that equal manner, which is neceſſary to attain the proper ends of them.

Both theſe powers of the will over the underſtanding, are, I think, evident, from the following inſtance. How ordinary is it for men, when they take any book in their hands, written in defence of principles, contrary to thoſe they have imbib'd, or openly eſpous'd with much zeal, to lay it aſide for no other reaſon?

And tho' it be, in every reſpect, well compos'd and deſign'd. Or if the entertaining manner of an author, or ſome end we have to ſerve in learning what he has to ſay, obliges us to proceed in reading ſuch a book; yet we may be ſenſible, how often the prejudice we have againſt his way of reaſoning, on the account I have mention'd, hinders us from examining the force, or diſcovering the evidence of it, as we ought. Nay, I am afraid, our prejudice againſt certain arguments, whereby we are unwilling to be convinc'd, may ſometimes grow the ſtronger, even in proportion to the ſtrength and evidence of them; which could not poſſibly be, if the will were always determin'd by light, and never blindly or perverſely follow'd the motions of concupiſcence. In truth, the underſtanding and will act with ſuch a reciprocal influence upon one another, that it is many times hard diſtinctly to know their proper effects, or to which of them they ſhould be attributed. As in ſome caſes we judge contrary to our inclinations, on the other hand, our inclinations do in their turn carry us againſt our judgment, and even oblige it to pronounce ſentence in favour of them, at the ſame time we know them to be criminal. In ſhort, as I can meditate upon what object I pleaſe, ſo I can take off my thoughts from it when I pleaſe, and I am equally conſcious of a power, or elſe I know nothing by conſciouſneſs, of carrying my enquiries forward upon it ſo long as I pleaſe, where no foreign or external accident intervenes. Tho', after all, perhaps the ſhorteſt method with the fataliſts, as to this point, is to ſay, that the underſtanding and will are not, as we obſerv'd before, two faculties really diſtinct, but a ſimple, individual power of the ſoul, diſtinguiſh'd only by the different manner, wherein the object of it appears to us; which power, when exerting itſelf upon any intelligible object, we call underſtanding; and when apply'd to an eligible object, we expreſs by election or will.

I have hitherto only conſider'd ſome of the natural reaſons for the liberty of human will. But the teſtimony of the holy ſcriptures, to which I have now a right to appeal, puts the matter in queſtion out of all doubt. It is impoſſible to account for the expoſtulations of God in them with wicked men, upon any wiſe reaſons, concerning the ſins they had committed, or their having neglected the ordinary means of ſalvation. For where can be the reaſon of reproving men for acting in purſuance of neceſſary and invincible motives; for chuſing thoſe deluſions, which they could not but chuſe; or for committing ſuch ſinful actions, as they could not poſſibly avoid; nay, which the laſt judgment of their underſtanding inevitably oblig'd them to commit?

But I ſhall not inſiſt upon this conſideration, ſince all thoſe, who acknowledge the truth of the ſcriptures, and the wiſdom of God, in whatever he has reveal'd, muſt of neceſſity acknowledge the freedom of human will, in the largeſt ſenſe, wherein it is underſtood. I ſhall only take notice, that as ſuch a freedom is evidently inferr'd from the argument foregoing, ſo there are other texts of ſcripture, which directly acquaint us with the nature and reaſons of it. Such are the expreſs declarations of our Saviour, that *ſeeing men ſee, and will not perceive*; *that light is come into the world*; *but men love darkneſs rather than light, becauſe their deeds are evil.* The apoſtle in the ſeventh chapter to the *Romans* is copious upon this head; but the ſum of what he ſays lies in the following words. *I delight in the law of God*, whether natural or reveal'd; *after the inward man*; *but I ſee another law in my members, warring againſt the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of ſin, which is in my members* *. From all which, it ſufficiently appears, that human will is not only influenc'd by light, but by ſenſe, and that in a reciprocal proportion to the force of theſe two principles, men commonly make a good or ill uſe of their liberty. I ſay, commonly, becauſe, notwithſtanding the force of them, the will has ſtill a power to act, or to ſuſpend action.

But whatever has been urg'd in point of reaſon, or from the authority of divine revelation, the fataliſts will ſay, it muſt go for nothing, as being neceſſarily founded in ſome miſtake, if, after all, ſuch a freedom as we ſuppoſe, be, in the nature of the thing, abſolutely impoſſible. But whence ariſes the impoſſibility of it? Not from the neceſſity of the will's following the laſt judgment of the underſtanding; that point has been ſpoken to already: It muſt therefore ariſe, becauſe it is impoſſible, that any being ſhould have a power of ſelf-motion, or of beginning motion. But to ſay this, is to deny the poſſibility of a power, which in fact ſubſiſts; and which we muſt neceſſarily attribute to the firſt cauſe. And if God have, as he confeſſedly has, ſuch a power, why ſhould it be thought impoſſible for him to communicate it to other intelligent beings? Except the enemies of liberty could ſhew, what they will never be able to do, that to ſuppoſe the communication of ſuch a power, implies an expreſs contradiction.

As to the opinion of thoſe, who contend man may be ſaid to act freely, tho' he is neceſſarily determin'd to act in ſuch a particular manner, becauſe he is not ſenſible of any acceſſory force or impulſe from without upon his mind; this is only to make him a voluntary, not properly a free agent; and to grant him ſuch a liberty, as imports little more than a mere ſpontaneous motion. Nay, if they mean nothing by liberty in man, but a freedom from all external or ſenſible violence, even certain mechanical productions of art, may, in a like improper ſenſe, be ſaid to move freely; becauſe their motion depends on certain ſprings within, which the other parts of them neceſſarily follow, without any foreign impulſe or direction. According to this notion of freedom, the deſire of good in general, the moſt natural, neceſſary, and invincible deſire of all, would be the moſt free; becauſe nothing from without can either poſſibly force, obſtruct, or ſuppreſs it. In which way of arguing therefore, freedom will not only conſiſt with abſolute neceſſity; but the more neceſſary any act of the will is, we ſhall in proportion exert it with the greater freedom. We may add, that to ſay the will is free, in oppoſition to all external violence, or to place the formal notion of its freedom in this, that it cannot be forc'd, is only to ſay, that what is free, is not ſubject to force; to found the reaſon of a thing in that which no body ever deny'd, and the denyal whereof would render the point in queſtion abſurd and ridiculous. For if the will could be externally forc'd, the freedom of it would, by that very conceſſion, be abſolutely and entirely deſtroy'd.

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* *Rom.* 7. 22, 23.

But I proceed to ſhew in the next place,

CHAP. IX.

II. *That there can be no ſuch thing as moral good or evil, reward or puniſhment; nothing blameable or praiſe-worthy, without freedom of will, as it imports a liberty of choice or refuſal indifferently.*

WE have no idea of any virtuous or ſinful action, but only as it proceeds from freedom of choice. Neither is there any other ground of diſtinguiſhing the actions of moral, from thoſe of natural agents. A man may as properly be call'd a good man in the moral ſenſe of the word, becauſe he is healthy and ſtrong, or has a fine regular ſhape, as from any action he does, provided he was under a natural and abſolute neceſſity of doing it, or or was determin'd to do it by any thing, but his own free will. For otherways it would not be the act of his will, but of the cauſe whatever that might be, which determin'd his will; to which therefore all the moral goodneſs of the action ought to be aſcrib'd, as the agent; and not to him, as being only a paſſive inſtrument. By parity of reaſon, he cannot juſtly be charg'd with any crime, but upon this ground, that he freely chuſes to commit it; or commits it with a reluctance, which might, by a due uſe of his liberty, have been the occaſion of preſerving his innocence.

By a neceſſary conſequence, to deny the freedom of will in men, is to deſtroy all the grounds and reaſons of rewarding or puniſhing them. There being nothing but moral virtue, which is the proper ſubject of reward; or ſome immoral action, which can render men obnoxious to puniſhment. And therefore, according to the ordinary courſe of proceeding in all civil governments, where any action is conſider'd as the ſubject of a law (prohibited or requir'd, upon certain conſiderations, by it) there the executive power, in paſſing judgment upon ſuch an action, has, or always ſhould have regard to the intention of the party concern'd; and ought to juſtify or condemn him accordingly.

The higheſt violation of the law, and of the rights of human ſociety, is the taking away the life of an innocent perſon. But even that is never judg'd murder, or puniſh'd as ſuch, where the fact appears to have been purely caſual, or without any malicious intention of the party who committed it. If in ſome countries there have been men put to death, without being charg'd with any crime in a moral ſenſe, on account of their age, of madneſs, or any infectious diſtemper; ſuch executions are not properly to be conſider'd as puniſhments, but as arbitrary acts of the civil magiſtrate, for reaſons of ſtate; which yet all wiſe and civiliz'd nations, that have had any true ſentiments of morality, have ever thought it impious and unjuſt to exerciſe.

The argument againſt what I am aſſerting, from our puniſhing dogs, and other animals, is equally weak and inconcluſive. All the force of it lies in uſing the word puniſhing in an improper and equivocal ſenſe; becauſe it bears ſome kind of reſemblance to the puniſhment we inflict on perſons who have offended us, or over whom we have ſome power and authority.

We may alſo, in a metaphorical and abuſive way of ſpeaking, be ſaid to reward brute animals for certain actions or ſervices done by them; but, ſtrictly ſpeaking, free and reaſonable agents, that have a power of acting, or of ſuſpending action, are only the proper ſubjects of reward. This point is confirm'd by the authority of a perſon divinely inſpir'd. When the apoſtle argues, *if I do* *this thing willingly, I have a reward*; he evidently ſuppoſes, that the formal reaſon of rewarding any action, proceeds from its being an effect of free will, determining a man to do it, at the ſame time it might, if he had pleas'd, been left undone. But, according to the fataliſts, if a man would expreſs himſelf clearly, or without equivocation, he ought not to ſay, if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if I do this thing neceſſarily, or in conſequence of certain preceding cauſes of action, determining me to do it, and which I could not poſſibly reſiſt the force of. This, indeed, is a diſtinct and intelligible way of ſpeaking; but in the way of argument, nothing can tend more to confound all our ideas of what it is pretended to aſſert, or would more effectually deſtroy the proper and formal reaſons of reward, which yet, at the ſame time, it is deſign'd to account for.

Blame and praiſe have the ſame proper and original foundation in free will, with reward and puniſhment. And what was ſaid under that diſtinction, in reference to the equivocal uſe of terms, will indifferently anſwer all the arguments againſt free will, which can be brought from a popular way of ſpeaking, when we praiſe or blame things, without either underſtanding or will, and even ſometimes without life. But the reaſons of that internal praiſe or blame which we are conſcious of in our own minds, when we reflect upon our having done, or omitted to do our duty, or our having acted in ſome open and notorious violation of it, is what it principally imports us to conſider. Now, ſetting aſide all arguments from the nature of the thing, every man, I believe, may be convinc'd from ſenſible experience, that the joy, which ſprings up in his mind, upon his having done any very good or pious action, proceeds from hence, that it was the effect of his own free choice, when he might have done, or was perhaps under ſome ſtrong temptation to do otherways. Nay, this joy will naturally ariſe and diffuſe itſelf, in proportion to that freedom and facility, wherewith he choſe to act ſo good a part. For which reaſon probably it may be, that perſons who, on other occaſions, have given the moſt noble proofs of their generoſity; yet when ſollicited even in favour of deſerving perſons, are ſometimes obſerv'd to be of a more cold and narrow temper; this may poſſibly proceed from vanity, or a ſecret opinion (which great men are not the leſs apt to entertain on account of their character) that they are beſt able to judge, how their favours ought to be diſtributed; or that it will leſſen the credit of any generous action to have the opportunity or method of it preſcribed to them. But as we ought to attribute the actions of men to the beſt motives, it ſeems more reaſonable and juſt to account for ſuch a conduct, upon on a ſuppoſition, that the doing a good or great action from our own free and proper choice, will contribute more ſenſibly to the pleaſure of our reflection upon it.

WITHOUT freedom of choice, all the reaſons of blame, or remorſe of mind, and, in conſequence, of repentance, are alſo entirely deſtroy'd. For how can a man condemn himſelf for having done, what he was under an abſolute neceſſity of doing; and it would be equally abſurd to wiſh any action undone; for that would be to found a wiſh upon an impoſſibility, an antecedent impoſſibility in the nature of the thing, upon his own confeſſion. He may, indeed, lament his unhappineſs, in having been brought under ſuch circumſtances, wherein he was oblig'd to act contrary to his rule; but this can no more be call'd an act of conſcience or remorſe, than his lamenting, that he was born to no better fortune, or under circumſtances that have expos'd him to any uncommon hardſhips, or inconveniences of life.

CHAP. X.

III. *An objection or two anſwer'd againſt freedom of will, as before ſtated.*

1. IT is pretended, that for a man to be determin'd in what he does, is a greater argument of perfection, than if he ſhould have a power indifferently of doing what he will. Now ſhould it be granted, that there is no neceſſity why finite beings ſhould be without all manner of imperfection, this argument would evidently loſe all its force. But to ſpeak directly to it, how is it an imperfection to have a principle of our own actions within us? If this way of arguing be juſt, the more dependent man is, the more perfect will human nature be. How, again, is it an imperfection, when any good or evil is propos'd, to be able to chuſe the good and refuſe the evil; or of two goods, to chuſe the greater; and of two evils, the leſs? If our inclinations ſometimes impoſe ſo far upon us, as to divert the underſtanding from enquiring after truth, with that application or impartiality, which are requiſite perfectly to diſcover it; and, in conſequence of a wrong judgment, cauſe it to make a wrong choice: This we own to be an imperfection; yet ſuch an imperfection, as does not neceſſarily ariſe from the freedom of the will, but only from the ill uſe which we accidentally make of it.

However, if it be a juſt argument againſt the being of a thing, that it implies, in the nature of it, ſome imperfection, man can neither be a free, nor, indeed, a neceſſary agent. Becauſe, let us take which ſide of the queſtion we pleaſe, there is viſibly an imperfection; tho' much greater, indeed, upon a ſuppoſition, that he is over-rul'd in his choice, by ſome antecedent, tho' unknown cauſe, than of his being by accident capable of making a wrong choice; which yet he had it in his power not to make.

2. It has been objected againſt the poſſibility of liberty, in the true ſenſe of it, that every thing muſt have an antecedent cauſe; and every cauſe operates neceſſarily as to the effect it produces. But this, as it relates to the modification of things, and not to their exiſtence, is taking the very point in queſtion for granted; and ſuppoſes, what we deny, that no created being can have a power communicated to it, by almighty God, of ſelf-motion. Yet admitting more, than it is neceſſary for us to do, that the will muſt always be excited, or put in motion by ſome extrinſick cauſe: It will not therefore follow; but that, when once it is in motion, on what occaſion, or by what means ſo ever, it may move this or that way; unite itſelf to, or fly from any particular object; at pleaſure.

The argument againſt liberty from the divine preſcience, is ſo weak and trifling, and is now, if I miſtake not, ſo univerſally exploded, by the learned and more inquiſitive part of mankind, that I only mention it in the concluſion of this head, without thinking my ſelf oblig'd to take any farther notice of it.

SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

BOOK III.
Of Creation and Providence.

PART II.
Of Providence.

CHAP. I.
That there is a divine providence; and, firſt, over the material world.

THAT God governs the material world, is a principle, which, tho' queſtion'd by ſome who have aſcrib'd both the origin and formation of things to him, yet neceſſarily follows from that very conceſſion. In order to prove this, we are only to enquire, what were the principal ends of Gods making the world, with this admirable variety of beings in it; and to ſhew, that without both a preſerving and over-ruling providence, thoſe ends could not be attain'd; and which therefore it had been unworthy of the divine wiſdom to propoſe.

GOD never acts without deſign, and his deſign always bears the character of his attributes. To ſuppoſe that he made the world, only to give a glorious eſſay of his power, of his wiſdom and goodneſs in making it, without any other view, or the leaſt intention of taking farther care of it, will not ſufficiently account for the reaſons, upon which we ought to believe, in honour to his attributes, that he was induc'd to make it. For whatever effects of his power, his wiſdom, or goodneſs, originally appear'd in the firſt production of things, it was impoſſible for them to continue in that order, wherein they were diſpos'd by God, without his preſiding over them, and regulating their motions; the ſubſequent irregularities, which muſt neceſſarily have happen'd in his work, if not a total inaction of the whole, through every part of it, would have tended in as high a meaſure to derogate from his wiſdom, as the work itſelf had antecedently done to diſcover the excellent contrivance, and advance the glory of it.

IT may, perhaps, be thought, that God, having once perfected his deſign of creating the world, and put the ſeveral parts of it into the moſt regular and uſeful order, it was rather agreeable to his wiſdom, that he ſhould then withdraw his hand, and leave all things to act of themſelves, by virtue of the primary and general laws of motion impreſs'd on them. As there is no neceſſity, when a man has compos'd any artificial work, that ſo long as it will preſerve itſelf in the ſtate or ſituation proper to it, he ſhould be continually employ'd towards rectifying either the ſprings, or other parts of it. 'Tis granted, human art can only produce a machine, whoſe motion is of a temporary continuance, and even whoſe parts muſt in time, tho' by inſenſible degrees of neceſſity decay, and want to be repair'd. But what ſhould hinder an infinitely wiſe and powerful being, to contrive ſuch an exact ballance of power in the things he has made, that their motions and reſpective influences might be perpetual, without his interpoſition? Or if ſome inſenſible parts were ſtill to fly off from the ſeveral materials, which compoſe his work, how eaſy is it for him to ſupply the deficiency, with an acceſſion of new and ſimilar parts? But to this we may oppoſe the principles of the beſt modern philoſophers, that the parts of matter, in what order ſoever diſpos'd by the power of God, after he had once put them in motion; yet can now neither gravitate, nor communicate motion, nor, in any reſpect, act upon one another, but by virtue, and in conſequence of God's immediate action.

THIS notion of a fix'd and efficacious law of mechaniſm, whereby the ſeveral parts of the world preſerve their proper order, or perform their reſpective functions, is alſo contrary to the opinion of thoſe, who maintain, that the conſervation of things implies a repeated and poſitive act of creation. For they do not think it ſufficient to ſupport things in being, that God leaves them to the internal force of their own nature, or that he does not actually exert his power to deſtroy them. But they ſuppoſe them ſuſtain'd by one repeated and immediate action of his power; as light is continued in the air by a ſucceſſive flow of rays from the ſun.

BUT other learned men have not thought the reaſons, upon which this opinion is founded, altogether concluſive. When a creature is once brought into being, they ſuppoſe as poſitive an act of power neceſſary to annihilate it, as was originally requir'd to give it exiſtence. They cannot conceive, how annihilation ſhould be perform'd, without the action of ſome power upon the being to be annihilated, and which is confeſs'd in itſelf to have no manner of action, or poſſibility of it, to that end. Laſtly, they think it derogatory to the power of God to ſay, that the effect of it cannot for ſome time ſubſiſt, when he ceaſes to exert it: Since the effects of human art themſelves are obſerv'd to remain, after the artiſt has put his finiſhing hand to them. Tho' this illuſtration, indeed, is far from clearing the point. For the reaſon, why ſuch works continue for a conſiderable time in the ſtate wherein they were left, is becauſe the materials, out of which they were made, pre-exiſted, and the artiſt had nothing to do, but to modify, and put them in a proper order together. But there is a wide difference between our reaſoning concerning the exiſtence of things, and the modes of their exiſting; theſe often depend on the power or action of ſecond cauſes; but how they come to exiſt, or are ſupported in being, is a queſtion that can only relate to the power of God.

IT is leſs neceſſary ſtrictly to examine which of theſe opinions is the true one, ſince the authors, on both ſides, agree in the ſame deſign, of doing honour to God. Thoſe who contend, that a poſitive act of power is requir'd to ſupport things in being, think their opinion tends more to the advancement of his glory, as it ſuppoſes the creatures to have a more abſolute and entire dependence on him. Others conceive, that it gives us ſtill a greater idea of the power of God, that it ſhould even extend to the creation of things capable of ſubſiſting, by virtue of their original conſtitution, ſo long as he does not think fit by any poſitive act of his will to deſtroy them.

But in caſe neither of theſe arguments for the providence of God, from the neceſſity of his acting upon the material world, or of his upholding all things continually by the word of his power, ſhould be of any force; but that we were oblig'd to grant he might have created the world in ſuch a manner, that there had been no occaſion for his ſupporting it every moment ſucceſſively in being; or his interpoſing in the regulation of its ſeveral parts; (the ſprings of it having been made ſo ſtrong, and ſo perfectly adjuſted in number, weight, and meaſure, that they might preſerve their proper powers and order for many thouſand years) yet God had another end in creating the material world, and which appears indeed to have been his principal end, that could not have been anſwer'd upon this hypotheſis.

Chap. II.

A farther argument for a divine providence over the material world, from the ends for which God created it reſpecting mankind, and other animals.

The world, this habitable part of it in particular, was made to be the ſcene of human life and action; in order to ſupply all the wants, and gratify all the reaſonable appetites and deſires of man: In ſhort, to make him as happy, as his preſent ſtate and condition in it would admit. But if we look no higher than to the power and progreſs of viſible or ſecond cauſes, man, inſtead of attaining the happineſs, for which he was created in this world, might have been, with reſpect to his preſent ſubſiſtence, of all other creatures, moſt miſerable; as being moſt expos'd to miſery, and moſt ſenſible of it. For ſhould all things operate by a fix'd and immutable law of mechaniſm, it is highly reaſonable to believe, mankind, in a few ages, might become ſo populous, that the produce of the earth would not be ſufficient to anſwer all their exigences; much leſs to contribute to thoſe common pleaſures and enjoyments, whereof, in their original ſtate, they were at once made ſo capable and deſirous. Nay, had man continued, as he might have done, in a ſtate of innocence; or, had he been leſs irregular or corrupt, than at preſent; as this reaſon of a divine providence, from the multiplication of human race, had been more ſtrong; ſo the objections againſt the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, from his creating man with capacities and deſires, which, in the natural courſe of things, could not be gratify'd, would have been more unanſwerable.

NOW, that mankind are not ſo numerous, as we may eaſily ſuppoſe they might have been, ſince the time of the creation, there is a viſible providence (notwithſtanding all the methods of human induſtry) in relieving their ſeveral wants; and ſupplying them with all things neceſſary to life; eſpecially in very large and populous cities, where of neceſſity there muſt be a great number of poor people, and who cannot ordinarily provide for themſelves or their dependents, (to ſay nothing of caſualties, or what they call hard times) at ſo eaſy an expence as in other places. But ſhould no providence interpoſe, by any ſecret methods, towards the relief or ſupport of the indigent, under the like circumſtances, a great number of them would, in the natural probability of the thing, be in imminent danger of periſhing by want. I may add, that a preſerving providence is not only viſible in furniſhing men, but alſo other animals, with all the neceſſary ſupports of life. The ſeveral kinds whereof, if God had not interpos'd in their preſervation by particular wills, might have periſh'd, or by one accident or other been deſtroy'd; and ſo the ends of his creating them, which we ought not to admit, poſſibly at leaſt fruſtrated.

BOTH theſe conſiderations towards inducing our belief of a preſerving providence, are particularly inſiſted on in the holy ſcriptures. In general, *God is the fountain of life; and preſerves both man and beaſt. The earth is full of his goodneſs: He is the Lord, who exerciſeth loving-kindneſs in it: He giveth food to all fleſh, and ſatisfieth the deſire of every living thing. His delights,* indeed, *are* more peculiarly *with the ſons of men. He gives them all things richly to enjoy. He preventeth them with the bleſſings of goodneſs. He is a father of the fatherleſs. He delivereth the poor and needy, and him that hath no helper.* Yet the effects of his providence are alſo conſpicuous in the particular care he takes of all animals, and the moſt inconſiderable of them. *Both ſmall and great beaſts, and things creeping innumerable, wait upon him, that he may give them their meat in due ſeaſon. When he giveth them, they gather it. He openeth his hand, and they are filled with good. Not a ſparrow falls to the ground without him.*

AS a preſiding providence over the material world is neceſſary towards the preſervation, and more happy being of the creatures in it; ſo it is alſo in order to the puniſhing or rewarding men in this life, conſider'd as beings capable of a juſt retribution, in conſequence of their good or evil actions. But having ſhew'd, on a former occaſion, the impoſſibility of adapting a fix'd and immutable law to the ſtate and condition of free or mutable agents, I ſhall here beg leave to refer * to what has been moſt judiciouſly, and with his uſual perſpicuity, ſaid on the occaſion, by the excellent author, of *The reaſonableneſs and certainty of the chriſtian religion.*

CHAP. III.

The neceſſity of acknowledging a divine providence over mankind, conſider'd as intelligent beings, endow'd with a principle of liberty, as ſocial creatures; as expos'd to ill accidents; as ſubject to errors in judgment; and to other defects.

NEITHER, without a providence, could the great ends of creation be attain'd, with reſpect to the government of mankind; eſpecially if we ſtill ſuppoſe them capable of making an ill uſe of their liberty. For tho' we ſhould grant, that in a ſtate of innocence, they might have preſerv'd themſelves, and perform'd all their relative duties in that order, which was neceſſary to promote their own happineſs, and that of the whole community. Yet in caſe, by an abuſe of their freedom, they ſhould fall from that happy ſtate, and, above all, if a general corruption of manners ſhould ſpread itſelf among them; ſuch diſorders would unavoidably have happen'd in ſociety, that unleſs God had reſerv'd to himſelf a power, on proper occaſions, of rectifying them; we could not have juſtify'd either his wiſdom, goodneſs, or juſtice in the creation of man, conſider'd as a ſocial creature. For otherways it might too probably have been the caſe of ſome perſons, on account of the power and natural malignity of temper in other men, (irritated, perhaps, by the motives of ſelf-love and revenge) that the miſeries of this life would have more than over-ballanc'd the benefits of it. If, now, that a wiſe and good providence governs the world, there is ſo much evil, confuſion, and injuſtice in it; what a diſmal ſcene of miſery would it have been, without an over-ruling power, to prevent or put a ſtop to the deſigns of wicked men; or, if they were ſuffer'd to be executed, to make them the accidental occaſion of ſome great good, and many times, in direct oppoſition to thoſe ends, which they were intended to ſerve? Certainly it would have been more eligible to good men, had God immediately after the creation abandon'd all care of them, never to have been at all, than to have been left under ſuch circumſtances of life, to which death had been continually preferable; nay, under which the better and more inoffenſively they conducted themſelves, the more they would have been expos'd to the common rapine and inſults of wicked men. I might farther obſerve, that mankind, conſider'd in a publick or national capacity, can only be puniſh'd or rewarded in this life. If it was therefore fit, upon any conſiderations of wiſdom or juſtice, that ſocieties, as ſuch, ſhould be at any time puniſh'd or rewarded; it was for the ſame reaſon, and in the ſame meaſure fit, that a divine providence ſhould here interpoſe in the government of them, to that end.

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* "The abettors of the mechanical hypotheſis argue, that God acts in the moſt general and uniform ways; that it is more becoming his wiſdom to let nature have its courſe; and that conſtantly to interpoſe, would be a diſparagement to the order and contrivance in his eſtabliſhment of the laws of motion; that matter and motion are with that wiſdom ſet to work, that they can perform all, without any more than preſerving and ſuſtaining them in their being and operations; and that he is the beſt artiſt, who can contrive an engine that needs the leaſt meddling with it, after it is made. But it ought to be conſider'd what the nature of the engine is, and what the proper ends and uſes of it are. And if the nature of it be ſuch, that it cannot anſwer the ends for which it was fram'd, without ſometimes an aſſiſting hand, it would be no point of wiſdom in the artificer, for the credit of his contrivance, to loſe the moſt uſeful ends, deſign'd by it. As if among other uſes, this curious engine were deſign'd to reward the good, and puniſh bad men; to remove the puniſhment upon amendment, and to a renew it upon relapſe. Since brute matter is incapable of varying its motion, and ſuiting itſelf to the ſeveral ſtates and changes of free agents, he muſt aſſiſt it, unleſs he will loſe the chief end, for which it is to ſerve. It is no defect in the ſkill and wiſdom of the Almighty, that matter and motion have not free will, as men have; but it would be a great defect in his wiſdom, not to make them the inſtruments of rewards and puniſhments; becauſe it is impoſſible for them, of themſelves, to apply and ſuit themſelves to the ſeveral ſtates and conditions of free agents. *Jenkins of the reaſonableneſs and certainty of the chriſtian religion. Vol.* 2. *p.* 198, 199.

And therefore in ſcripture the ſtate of a nation, conſider'd as morally good or evil, is made the reaſon of God's proceeding after a different manner in the diſpenſations of his providence towards them. Sometimes he viſits a wicked people with dreadful and publick calamities; with earthquakes; with peſtilence and famine; with fire and ſword. At other times, the natural tendency which righteouſneſs has to exalt a nation, is providentially improv'd by him to make it ſtill more happy in all the advantages of peace, proſperity, and plenty. *At what inſtant, he ſpeaks concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down, and to deſtroy it; if that nation, againſt whom he has pronounc'd, turn from their evil, he will repent of the evil, that he thought*

thought to do unto them. And at what inſtant, he ſpeaks concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in his ſight, then he will repent of the good, wherewith he ſaid, he would benefit them. He creates peace, and makes war. He turneth a fruitful land into barrenneſs, for the wickedneſs of them that dwell therein *. Again, in favour of good men, *he turneth the wilderneſs into a ſtanding water, and water ſprings into dry ground* †. Alternately as a people are wicked or obedient, *he gives them the rain in due ſeaſon, the firſt rain, and the latter rain, that they may gather in their corn, their wine, and their oil.* Or, *he ſhuts up heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit* ‡. *He cauſeth it*, therefore, *to come, whether for correction, or for mercy.*

2. IF we conſider man in his more private capacity, the reaſons of a providence to direct and govern him are equally conſpicuous. The many accidents of life, eſpecially of infancy, expoſe him to ſo great and continual dangers, that, to human appearance, 'tis ſcarce poſſible he ſhould avoid them all with ſafety, if a particular providence, how inviſible ſoever the methods of it may be, ſhould not ſometimes intervene to protect and deliver him. There are few perſons, if any perhaps living, of a more advanc'd age, who cannot (how much ſoever they may be inclin'd to attribute to chance) but aſſent, to the truth of what is here obſerv'd, from their own experience; if they will but duly attend to all the circumſtances of their deliverance, on certain nice and critical conjunctures. It is highly probable, that holy *David*, in the following pious ejaculations upon the ſubject of providence, founded them both upon experience, and the reaſon of the thing. *My defence is of God. The Lord is my ſhepherd; I laid me down and ſlept, I awak'd, for the Lord ſuſtained me. Thou art my hope, O Lord God; thou art my truſt from my youth. By thee have I been holden up from the womb. Thou, Lord, only makeſt me to dwell in ſafety. The Lord is a refuge to the oppreſs'd, a refuge in times of trouble. He holdeth our ſoul in life, and ſuffereth not our feet to be mov'd. He will be our guide even unto death.*

3. THERE are alſo wiſe reaſons to be aſſign'd for a divine providence, in order to the happineſs of man, with reſpect to the government both of his thoughts and actions. We ſee but a very little way upon the chain of cauſes; and, for that reaſon, often make a wrong judgment concerning the tendency of things; whether in order to the attainment of what appears deſirable to us, or towards the avoidance of any evil. For ſometimes the grati-

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* *Jer.* 18. 7, 8, 9, 10. † *Pſal.* 107. 34, 35. ‡ *Deut.* 11. 14, 17.

fication of our deſires, is obſerv'd to terminate in our miſery; as, at other times, what we apprehended, and endeavour'd to divert as an evil, often proves, in the ſequel, an occaſion of ſome great benefit and advantage to us.

4. If we cannot certainly judge, whether any end we propoſe (however it may at preſent appear) will really prove good or prejudicial in its conſequences to us; we are no leſs ſubject to error in conſulting about the proper means of effecting ſuch an end; or, if we judge rightly in this reſpect, we are not always capable of employing thoſe means. As, on the other hand, whatever care we take to fly from any impending evil, it is not, according to the viſible courſe of things, in our power to eſcape it. Upon which ſeveral accounts, it is highly reaſonable for us to argue from the goodneſs of God, that he has reſerv'd to himſelf a power both of directing our intentions, and of fruſtrating, or aſſiſting our endeavours. The exerciſe of which power, in each reſpect, is therefore expreſſly attributed to him in the holy ſcriptures. *He giveth wiſdom to the wiſe, and knowledge to them, that have underſtanding. There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheleſs the counſel of the Lord, that ſhall ſtand. For he knoweth the thoughts even of the wiſe, that they are vain.* Again, when he ſees fit, that the moſt probable and beſt form'd deſigns in human appearance, ſhould not ſucceed, *he turneth wiſe men backward, and maketh their knowledge fooliſh*; or, by one method or other, which perhaps they leaſt of all ſuſpected, *diſappointeth their devices, ſo that they are not able to perform. For, who is he that ſaith, and it cometh to paſs, when the Lord commandeth it not.* As, on the other hand, when he would have the moſt improbable deſigns ſucceed, and, in all human expectation, by the moſt improbable means; *his ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs; he giveth power to the faint, and to them, who have no might, he encreaſeth ſtrength.* Or, laſtly, when he thinks proper to inflict any preſent evil upon men, by way of medicinal or judiciary chaſtiſement, they are equally incapable, by any human methods, of avoiding it. For, *who is able to ſtand before him? Who may ſtand in his ſight, when he is angry? In his hand is power and might, ſo that none is able to withſtand him; neither is there any that can deliver out of his hand.*

Yet the great argument for a divine providence in the government of mankind, is ſtill behind. I have conſider'd man in his ſocial and more private ſtate of life, and ſhew'd, how, on both accounts, there is great reaſon to believe from the ends of divine goodneſs in creating him, that God did not, immediately after he was created, diſmiſs him from his hands, without any deſign of taking farther notice or care of him. Which is the very argument of the apoſtle, by way of alluſion indeed, to that natural affection all creatures are obſerv'd to bear to their young, but of itſelf ſtrictly concluſive, in the following words, *for we are alſo his offſpring* [*].

Chap. IV.

A farther argument for the providence of God *over mankind, with reſpect to the ends of religion.*

WHEN we conſider man as a religious creature, capable of worſhipping and doing honour to God, who has preſcrib'd him a law to that end; this capacity, how reaſonable ſoever in itſelf, how ever excellent in the proper uſes ariſing from it, yet would have been of very little uſe, without the belief of a divine providence. For conſidering the power and corrupt maxims of ſelf-love, few perſons would have been effectually influenc'd by the ſole motive of a generous and diſintereſted obedience [†]. And is it reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that a wiſe and good God ſhould make no competent proviſion towards attaining the moſt excellent end for which man was made, and in order to the attainment whereof, he was endow'd with all proper capacities? For *he hath created us for his glory; he hath form'd us* [‡]*: He made the earth, and created man upon it: He raiſed him up in righteouſneſs, and will direct all his ways* [**]. *All things were created by him, and for him* [††].

As the obedience we owe to God, could not have been in general ſufficiently enforc'd, but in conſequence of our believing a divine providence, neither, in particular, could the duty of prayer to God, the moſt ſolemn and honorary act of religious worſhip, and whereby we muſt ſenſibly recognize his *eternal power and Godhead*, have had any reaſonable foundation; whether conſider'd, as an act of invocation; or of praiſe; ſo far as it imports an acknowledgment of ſome ſpecial favour or bleſſing receiv'd. For if all things come to paſs either caſually, or by a fix'd and immutable chain of fate, our prayers are wholly inſignificant; nature will have its courſe, whatever becomes of the things, which we deſire, or deprecate. As, on the other hand, whatever advantages we enjoy, they are, upon this principle, owing either to accident, or a neceſſary combination of cauſes, and not to any particular intention in our favour, upon which the motives of gratitude are always moſt ſenſibly founded.

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[*] *Acts* 17. 28.

[†] It is juſtly obſerv'd by Biſhop *Stillingfleet*, on this occaſion, that the incomparable excellency and perfection, which is in the divine nature, to ſpirits advanc'd to a noble and generous height in religion, makes them exceedingly value their choice, while they diſregard whatever rivals with God for it. But were it not for thoſe magnetical hooks of obedience and eternal intereſt, there are few would be drawn to a due conſideration of, much leſs a delight in, ſo amiable and excellent a nature. And it is impoſſible to conceive why God, in the revelation of his will, ſhould ever ſo much as mention a future puniſhment, or promiſe an eternal reward, were not the conſideration of theſe things the ſinews of religion. *Orig. ſacr. p.* 318.

[‡] *Iſaiah* 43. 7.

[**] Ch. 45. 12, 13.

[††] *Col.* 1. 16.

As to the opinion of thoſe, who ſay, God, upon foreſight of the prayers of man to him, diſpos'd the order of things in ſuch a manner, that what they pray for ſhall happen, or what they deprecate be averted; this is altogether inconceivable, or rather, in the nature of the thing, ſuppoſing men free agents, impoſſible. For tho' God does foreſee which way men will act; yet nothing, upon the mechanical hypotheſis, can follow from his action, but, according to the laws of mechaniſm. In caſe any one, for inſtance, ſhould pray to be deliver'd from the danger of ſome infectious or peſtilential diſtemper, the vapour whereby it is propagated, will, notwithſtanding, purſue its natural courſe, and produce its effect, wherever it falls upon a proper ſubject; it can make no manner of diſtinction between him *that ſacrificeth*, and him *that ſacrificeth not*. God may, indeed, by ſome ſecret impulſe on the mind of man, which yet he is at liberty to follow, be the occaſion of diverting him from the ſcope of its motion; or perhaps on ſome extraordinary exigence, by an inviſible power, retard, accelerate, or obſtruct its courſe; but ſtill, if all things operate mechanically, whether man pray or no, it will unavoidably have its proper effect.

THERE is another caſe, wherein the motives to prayer, if all things come to paſs by the fix'd laws of mechaniſm, appear ſtill more evidently groundleſs. A man in the heat of battel, prays, that God would preſerve him from the inſtruments of death, which fly every where about him: Yet a ball from a cannon, or a muſquet will neceſſary purſue the line of its direction; it depends, however, on the choice of man, whether he will give it ſuch a particular direction, as, by the natural tendency of it, will take away the life of the perſon who deprecates the danger, wherewith he finds himſelf ſurrounded. In this caſe, it is impoſſible, upon any foreſight of his prayers, that the order of cauſes, which are in themſelves of arbitrary, and uncertain determination, ſhould be diſpos'd after ſuch a manner, as certainly to produce the deſir'd effect of them.

WHATEVER therefore is effected in the world, and eſpecially as it relates to the ſtate and government of mankind, the ſcriptures aſcribe to an immediate action of the divine power: Secondary cauſes may be ſaid indeed in a ſenſe to act, but 'tis properly God who does every thing. *He killeth, and he maketh alive; he woundeth, and he healeth. He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up. Unto the Lord our God belong the iſſues from death. He delivers from the ſnare of the fowler, and from the noiſome peſtilence: From the peſtilence, that walketh in darkneſs; and from the deſtruction, that waſteth at noon-day.*

WHATEVER has been ſaid concerning the neceſſity of believing a providence, in order to the great ends of religion in general, it may ſtill perhaps be pretended, that there are ſufficient grounds for ſecuring our obedience upon the proſpect of a future ſtate, wherein we ſhall be call'd to a ſtrict and impartial account for our actions here; even tho' God, upon his creating man, ſhould have left him ſo entirely in the hand of his own counſel, that he had not the leaſt intention of interpoſing, by any particular will, at preſent, in the government of him.

BUT this, in effect, is to grant the point in queſtion; and ſuppoſes it neceſſary for us to believe, at leaſt, that God will, one time or other, exerciſe the higheſt and moſt important act of government, in the cognizance he will take of his creatures, whoſe actions render them accountable to him: And that the doctrine of a providence is not therefore, abſolutely conſider'd in itſelf, either repugnant to the nature of God, or the condition of men. And if there be a neceſſity towards enforcing our obedience, that we ſhould believe God will ſometimes exerciſe any judicial act of his providence, why ſhould we believe that he will ſuſpend all judicial acts of it in this life; where a ſenſe of his favour or diſpleaſure in diſtributing temporal bleſſings or evils, have ſo great an influence even upon the minds and conduct of thoſe, who believe, *they have here no abiding city, but look for a better country.*

THIS principle alſo tends to remove the main objection of the *Epicureans* againſt a divine providence, taken from the inconvenience, which they apprehend would ariſe to the divine nature, if ſuppos'd to intermeddle in the affairs of the world, or to take the leaſt notice of them. For whenever men become accountable to God for their actions, his knowledge of them muſt be conceiv'd as particular, as if he had gradually obſerv'd the progreſs, with all the circumſtances of them, in this life. Tho' it is not neceſſary, indeed, to ſay any thing farther in anſwer to this objection, than that it is founded in a miſtaken notion, and highly derogates from the honour of the divine attributes. For what can embarraſs infinite wiſdom in the contrivance, or obſtruct infinite power in the government of all things. Infinite knowledge does as readily anſwer all thoſe queſtions of the incredulous, *who ſeek deep to hide their counſel from the Lord, and ſay, who ſeeth us; or how doth God know; and is there knowledge in the moſt high?*

We muſt attribute it to the ſame cauſe; to their not having an adequate idea of abſolute perfection; and their judging of the divine operations according to the model of their own narrow capacities, that ſome of the ancient philoſophers, who examin'd into the nature of things after a more accurate and juſt manner, than the *Epicureans*; yet could not eaſily apprehend, how the providence of God ſhould extend to take in all the variety of beings and events in the world, at once. Tho', indeed, the doctrine of a general providence, which only takes care of the ſeveral ſpecies of beings, without any regard to the ſeveral individuals comprehended under them, is altogether unintelligible. For generals being made up of particulars, and not ſubſiſting abſtractedly, but really, and after a certain order in them; it is impoſſible that the whole ſhould be taken care of without a regular diſpoſition, which neceſſarily imports a particular care of every part. And therefore the ſcriptures not only attribute the preſervation and government of this whole ſyſtem of things, collectively conſider'd, or in reſpect to the more conſiderable parts of it, to God; but alſo repreſent the minuteſt creatures, as being ſeverally within the protection and verge of his providence. *He upholdeth all things by the word of his power. He, even he, is Lord alone; he made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their hoſt; the earth, and all things that are therein; the ſeas, and all that is therein; and he preſerveth them all. They continue this day according to his ordinances. He ruleth over all, and is the judge of all. He doth according to his will in the armies of the heavens, and among the inhabitants of the earth. All things ſerve and obey him. He giveth food to all fleſh. In his hand is the ſoul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind. The very hairs of our head are all number'd. We are his people, and the ſheep of his paſture. Behold, he is mighty, and deſpiſeth not any. He is a father of the fatherleſs, and a judge of the widows. He maketh poor, and maketh rich. He pulleth down one, and ſetteth up another. He ruleth by his power for ever. Not a ſparrow falls to the ground without him.* And he exerciſes all theſe acts of his providence after a manner, that when we conſult the idea of infinite perfection, cannot poſſibly be attended with the leaſt trouble or uneaſineſs. *For he is ſtrong that executeth his word, and there is no reſtraint to him. He neither ſlumbereth nor ſleepeth. Haſt thou not known? Haſt thou not heard? that the* *everlaſting God, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?*

What has been ſaid, may be ſufficient in general to evince the truth of a divine providence, and to ſhew us wherein it conſiſts. And tho' I am ſenſible there are ſeveral popular objections againſt the doctrine of it, which may deſerve to be conſider'd; yet I have here taken no notice of them, as more properly falling under the following heads, of the juſtice, the holineſs, the goodneſs, and wiſdom of God, in his providential diſpenſations. Upon all which articles, I ſhall be the ſhorter, as a great many things, which ought otherways to be ſaid in treating of them, have been already anticipated under the head of the divine attributes.

Chap. V.

That all the diſpenſations of divine providence are juſt.

It will be of little uſe to aſſert a divine providence, or to ſhew the neceſſity of believing it, upon any conſiderations whatever, unleſs we can prove, that God, in the exerciſe of it, acts by the rules of a fix'd and inviolable juſtice. *Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?* ſeems to be the firſt queſtion, which naturally occurs to our thoughts in conſequence of our believing, that there is ſuch a judge.

Now, in order to a more diſtinct vindication of the divine juſtice in adminiſtring the affairs of the world, it may be neceſſary to enquire, what the proper acts of juſtice are in perſons, with whom we have any entercourſe; or who are inveſted with ſovereign, or other competent authority over us. And,

I. Justice conſiſts in enacting reaſonable laws, and ſuch as are proper to the ſtate of thoſe whom they are intended to oblige. The right of God to preſcribe laws to his creatures, if there be any poſſible right of legiſlature, cannot be diſputed. But could he be capable of preſcribing ſuch laws to his creatures, as are either in themſelves unreaſonable, or, under their circumſtances, impracticable; this would be to exerciſe a power, whereof no juſt, or indeed tolerable reaſon could be given.

In the former reſpect, to require any thing of men, that is unreaſonable, is to put them under an engagement of acting contrary to the original order, or, as I may call it, the eſſential conſtitution of human nature; contrary to that very law which was given them, as the rule of their actions, and whereby alone they ought to act. And tho' 'tis true, that in regard to the method of diſpenſing his favours, God is a debtor to no man; yet, in conſequence of his creating men reaſonable beings, he is ſo far a debtor to the eternal rectitude of his own nature, and of his own law, that he cannot require any thing immediately tending to ſubvert or deſtroy it.

The command, wherewith *Abraham* was charg'd, to ſacrifice his ſon, is of no force towards overthrowing what is here ſaid. For tho' 'tis contrary to the natural reaſon of the thing, that a parent ſhould arbitrarily, or by his ſole pretended authority, take away the life of his child, or exerciſe a power he has not, and which was never given him; yet it is reaſonable, that the univerſal Lord and proprietor of all things, ſhould, by right of his ſovereign dominion, have an abſolute power of life or death, which he may execute after what manner, or by what inſtruments, he pleaſes.

A like anſwer will indifferently ſerve to what is objected from the commiſſion given to the *Iſraelites* to ſpoil the *Ægyptians*. For tho' 'tis unjuſt in one man, on account of the laws of ſociety, whether natural or poſitive (and particularly of that inconteſtable law, of doing to others as we would, in a ſuppos'd change of circumſtances, be done by) that he ſhould violently take away his neighbour's civil rights, or againſt his conſent; yet God, in whom the propriety of all things is veſted, and who cannot be bound in the exerciſe of his authority by any human contracts, may juſtly delegate a power to men to diſpoſſeſs others of what they have no right to, but in dependence on him, either in ſuch manner, or to ſuch ends and uſes, as he pleaſes to direct.

In the latter reſpect, it is no leſs injurious to the perfections of his nature, to ſuppoſe, that God ſhould enjoin any thing, under the circumſtances of thoſe, upon whom it is enjoin'd, abſolutely impracticable; tho' in its own nature, or upon a general conſideration of it, fit and reaſonable. This reflection is founded both on the wiſdom and juſtice of God. For where can be the wiſdom of requiring men to do what is impoſſible to be done? Or, in other words, of appointing means to no proper end? Or where the juſtice of putting men upon any attempts to effect what, after all their pains and aſſiduity, muſt neceſſarily prove ineffectual? The ſcriptures therefore ſpeak after a manner perfectly agreeable to our natural notions as to this point; in aſſuring us, that God *does not expect to reap where he has not ſown*; that *his ſtrength is ſufficient for us*; *that his ways are equal, but our ways unequal.* From which I ſhall only take occaſion to obviate a too common pretence of wicked men (and upon which even thoſe perhaps, who are more piouſly diſpos'd, are ſometimes too apt to excuſe their failures) that the commands of God are impoſſible, either in general, or in certain particular inſtances, to be kept. For if either we believe him wiſe or juſt in what he commands, ſuch a pretence muſt, for that very reaſon, be groundleſs, as derogating from the two eſſential perfections of his wiſdom and juſtice. And therefore the impoſſibility, which is objected, of keeping his commandments, muſt not lie in the nature of them, but ariſe from ſome accidental indiſpoſition in our ſelves to be govern'd by them.

BUT are all commands then unreaſonable, unleſs ſuch as are founded in the natural reaſon of things? What ſhall we judge concerning ſuch of them, as are purely arbitrary, and owe all their force and obligation to the power commanding? We ſay, that tho' ſuch commands are properly founded in authority, and not in any natural reaſon of them, abſolutely conſider'd; yet, relatively conſider'd, they are founded both in reaſon and juſtice; as being proper, and withal practicable teſts of obedience, and poſſibly adapted to many other very wiſe, and reaſonable ends of providence.

II. WHEN a proper ſanction is given to ſuch laws as have a reaſonable foundation, juſtice conſiſts in diſtributing rewards and puniſhment according to it. I do not hereby intend, that God is oblig'd to annex any poſitive reward in conſequence of man's obedience to his laws; becauſe they are antecedently oblig'd to obey him in all his commands, by virtue of that natural and indiſpenſable homage, which as his creatures, as reaſonable creatures, they owe to him. But ſhould he, out of his great goodneſs, or in order the more to encourage and animate the natural obedience of men, which he has a prior right to, give them, by expreſs promiſe, an expectation of ſuch and ſuch rewards, upon condition of their obeying him; there they have a fœderal right to the performance of his promiſe, and his juſtice obliges him, according to the cleareſt notions we have concerning any act of juſtice, to make it good to them. So that it now becomes, tho' originally proceeding from a pure motive of goodneſs, the ſubject matter of a proper and lawful demand. As the apoſtle plainly, but no leſs ſtrictly argues, *to him that worketh, the reward is* *reckon'd not of grace, but of debt* [*]. And again, *it is a righteous thing with God*, that is, conſequentially, and in regard of his promiſe, *to recompenſe reſt to you, who are troubled* [†].

The caſe both of enacting and of executing penalties is different. In both theſe reſpects, the exerciſe of Gods power ſeems more limited by the natural reaſon of the things themſelves. It is not ſo neceſſary that he ſhould propoſe rewards to men, for the encouragement of an obedience, they are antecedently bound to perform, as that he ſhould denounce certain puniſhment againſt them, in caſe of their diſobedience. This method of his treating with men, being abſolutely requir'd to preſerve the honour and authority of his laws; and in order more effectually to ſecure the other principal ends of his government.

But the great queſtion is, whether God is equally oblig'd, in ſtrict juſtice, to inflict what he has threaten'd, as to make good what he has promis'd. For in not puniſhing men, he is ſo far from doing them any injury, or dealing with them after a manner, which may give them juſt cauſe of complaint, that he exerciſes an act of clemency highly beneficial to them, and for which they cannot make too great returns of gratitude and obedience. Neither is his remiſſion of puniſhment in any reſpect injurious to himſelf. For tho' he has a right of puniſhing, and may, for that reaſon, juſtly puniſh; yet, if he pleaſes, he may alſo ſuſpend the exerciſe of that right, or even wholly recede from it. It being no wrong to any perſon, eſpecially upon wiſe and good conſiderations, to remit what is juſtly due to him, altogether or in part; except we ſhould ſuppoſe him antecedently oblig'd to puniſh, either by virtue of ſome ſuperior authority, which can have no place in God; or of ſome expreſs declaration to that end; or from an abſolute neceſſity of nature. In the former reſpect, ſome have thought the veracity of God ſtrictly obliges him to puniſh; in the latter, his invincible hatred of ſin.

But in the adminiſtration of civil government, this way of arguing, from the veracity of the legiſlative power (how expreſs ſoever the intermination of any penalty may be) will not hold good. It is ſo far from reflecting any diſhonour, or charge of infidelity upon Princes, to pardon certain crimes, which they have a right to puniſh, and have threaten'd to puniſh; that acts of grace are frequently the firſt, as being, in common eſteem, the brighteſt glories of their reign. Neither, in the ordinary way of commerce among men, is any one charg'd with falſhood or prevarication, for not doing what he has threaten'd; provided he is influenc'd only by ſuch conſiderations as properly affect himſelf, or from which he is under no engagement with reſpect to the authority or intereſts of other perſons. The ground of which common judgment of men in the caſe, I take to be this; that the intermination of any penalty always implies, in the natural conſtruction of the thing, a tacit reſerve of power in the perſon threatning, to ſuſpend, or wholly to remit the execution of it, as he thinks fit; ſince hereby he neither does any thing in prejudice of his own right, or that of the party threaten'd.

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[*] Rom. 4. 4.

[†] 2 Theſſ. 1. 6, 7.

But if the veracity of God do not neceſſarily oblige him to execute his threats, may not his invincible hatred to ſin render it abſolutely neceſſary for him, in one kind or other to take vengeance on the ſinner. Divines have been much divided upon this point. Some have thought that as God neceſſarily hates ſin, juſtice indiſpenſably obliges him to puniſh it. This being the proper and moſt effectual method of expreſſing his hatred to it. Others have thought, that if God ſhould be ſuppos'd to puniſh ſinners by an abſolute neceſſity of nature, a great many inconveniences, and ſuch whereof no good account can be given, would unavoidably follow. For,

1. They ſay, the hatred of God to ſin is evidently expreſs'd by his law written on our hearts; which cauſes us to commit it with a ſenſible reluctance; and fills the mind, after the commiſſion of it, ſtill with a more painful, and, many times, very laſting regret. Eſpecially in his reveal'd will, God has declar'd his deteſtation of ſin, in ſuch terms, and after ſuch a manner, as leave us no room to doubt, but that he hates it, with a perfect hatred. In particular, by requiring no leſs a ſacrifice, than that of his own ſon, by way of attonement for it; and by his threatning many temporal evils and calamities to ſinners; (for I ſhall not here enter upon the ſubject of hell torments) which evils he may juſtly inflict, if he pleaſes; but whether he ſhould inflict them, may poſſibly depend on other conſiderations, beſides thoſe of ſtrict juſtice.

2. If it be a good way of arguing, that God muſt of neceſſity puniſh ſinners, becauſe he hates ſin, and is juſt; it is ſaid, the inference will be equally good, that he muſt of neceſſity pardon the ſinner, becauſe he is merciful. It may, perhaps, be alledg'd, that the ſinner, in the natural order of our ideas, being antecedently liable to puniſhment, God muſt be ſuppos'd to act in relation to him according to that order, and ſo juſtice will take place upon him, before he can be capable of mercy. But this conſideration is of no weight, if we diſtinguiſh between the juſtice and mercy of

God, conſider'd abſtractedly in themſelves, and in the egreſs, or external operation of them. In themſelves, according to our manner of conceiving them, we allow the idea of juſtice previous to that of mercy; for where no offence has been committed, that deſerves puniſhment, there can be no occaſion for mercy to interpoſe towards the prevention of it. Yet this does not hinder, but that God, in the external acts of his juſtice or mercy, may invert, as he pleaſes, the order of them, and immediately proceed to pardon, without ever proceeding to puniſh. Otherways he would have two eſſential attributes directly inconſiſtent, as to the exerciſe of them with one another. One whereby he muſt neceſſarily, and conſequently immediately puniſh; and the other, whereby he may yet freely ſuſpend, and, if he think fit, wholly remit puniſhment, or any part of it.

3. THE doctrine of a juſtice purely vindictive, which they, who believe God neceſſarily puniſhes, aſcribe to him, lies under a greater prejudice on this account; as ſuch a juſtice in men, if it may be properly call'd ſo, always proceeds from ſome viſible and great imperfection; either from fear; or want of power; or from a narrow, and, perhaps, malignant temper of mind; or a deſire of revenging the injuries that have occaſion'd them ſome ſenſible pain or diſturbance. No Prince, except upon theſe motives (with any of which it is impoſſible the divine nature ſhould be affected) can be ſuppos'd capable of puniſhing the moſt obdurate or notorious malefactors, and purely for the ſake of puniſhing; or provided all the ends of government could be otherways ſecur'd as they ought.

III. JUSTICE conſiſts in puniſhing men, *only for their own crimes.* The reaſon of this is evident. For as it is the abuſe of our liberty, which, as we have prov'd on another occaſion, formally renders us liable to puniſhment; and we are only capable of abuſing our liberty by ſome perſonal act, however we may ſuffer by the action of another, or in conſequence of it; yet we cannot, in a ſtrict or proper ſenſe, be puniſh'd, unleſs for what we do, or, at leaſt, conſent to the doing of our ſelves.

How true ſoever this principle is in the theory, yet a great difficulty has been conceiv'd here to ariſe by occaſion of the ſin of our firſt parents. For tho' we could not actually conſent, or (ſo far as appears) by any neceſſary implication, to that ſin; yet it is certain we have, on many occaſions, experienc'd the dangerous and unhappy effects of it. As to ſuch of them, which are only of a temporary conſideration, whether reſpecting the ſufferings of this preſent life, or the loſs of that happy ſtate, which we were originally deſign'd for the enjoyment of, they may eaſily be accounted for, from the prerogative of God and his juſt dominion over his creatures. In conſequence of *Adam*'s ſin, he might juſtly deprive us of thoſe bleſſings, the continuance whereof would have been owing to his mere favour and donation; and which therefore he might, with equal juſtice, have depriv'd us of, in caſe *Adam* had never ſinn'd. This method of divine providence is highly agreeable to the ordinary proceedings of the civil magiſtrate in this world; where it is thought no injuſtice to exclude children on occaſion of certain crimes or forfeitures in their parents, from thoſe legal rights, that would have otherways deſcended to them by inheritance.

THE moral effects of *Adam*'s fall are thoſe, which men have found the greateſt difficulty in reconciling with their notions of the divine juſtice. It has been thought to bear a little hard on this attribute, that all mankind, for the ſin of one perſon, ſhould be involv'd, as ſoon as they are born, in the ſame guilt with him, even without the leaſt conſciouſneſs of it; and tho' they were never, in any reſpect, capable of concurring towards it.

THIS difficulty is ſtill the greater to thoſe, who contend, that children and idiots, who cannot be guilty of actual ſin, are many times ſeverely puniſh'd; and therefore their puniſhment can only be aſcrib'd to the guilt, which they have contracted by original ſin. As to the latter part of what is here obſerv'd, it is eaſily anſwer'd, from the diſtinction between ſuffering and puniſhment; God has a right to inflict ſuch evils, as he thinks proper on his creatures; provided they do not exceed the benefits of their creation; or will, in due time, be compenſated in a ſtate of happineſs, which will more than over-ballance the preſent ſenſe of them. Becauſe, in theſe caſes, there is a reaſonable preſumption, they would have conſented to the treatment they meet with, had the conditions of it been antecedently propos'd to them. As we are not therefore able to conceive, how any action, which is not voluntary, ſhould deſerve to be puniſh'd; we cannot look upon the moſt acute pains, which infants or idiots ſuffer, ſtrictly as puniſhments; but only as providential diſpenſations, which will, one time or other, after a method ſuitable to his juſtice, terminate in their happineſs or advantage; in caſe they do not, by any actual ſin, whereof they may be afterwards render'd capable, obſtruct or prevent the proper deſign of them.

BUT, ſetting aſide the temporary effects of ſin, the main queſtion is ſtill undetermin'd; how perſons can be juſtly charg'd with the guilt of thoſe crimes, wherein they could in no proper ſenſe be ſaid to partake; and yet ſo as to become the proper objects of God's wrath and diſpleaſure? This has been thought a hard ſaying,

ing, tho' ſeveral texts of ſcripture are produc'd to favour and ſupport it. It is alledg'd, that *by one man ſin enter'd into the world, and death by ſin, and ſo death paſs'd upon all men* *. That, *through the offence of one, many are dead* †. And that, *by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation* ‡. But it cannot be neceſſarily inferr'd from theſe words, that they relate to any thing more than a temporal death. If they ſhould extend to import, that all mankind are ſinners, and liable to the wrath of God, on account of *Adam*'s tranſgreſſion; there is ſtill a greater neceſſity, in honour both to the divine juſtice and holineſs, of explaining them, not as ſpeaking cauſally, but only conſequentially, upon the abuſe of man's liberty. As to what is farther added in the following verſe, that, *by one man's diſobedience, many were made ſinners* **; we are not to underſtand from the mere force of the words, men in an actual ſtate of ſin, but perſons who are reputed as ſinners, on occaſion of their being treated as ſuch; or if the words ſhould denote actual, and even habitual ſinners, all we can conclude from them, is, that by occaſion of that natural propenſion to ſin, which we confeſſedly derive from our firſt parents, we are frequently ſeduc'd actually to commit it. The argument, that men may as properly be ſaid to have ſinn'd in *Adam*, as †† *Levi* to have paid tythes in the loins of *Abraham*, is altogether inſignificant. St. *Paul*, in the paſſage referr'd to, introduces it as a more harſh illuſtration, with that ſoftning form of ſpeech, *as I may ſo ſay*. In the next place, this argument, if it may be conſider'd as one, proves too much. It will unavoidably follow from it, ſo far as it has any reaſonable foundation, not only that the firſt ſin of *Adam*, but all his other ſins; with all thoſe of our progenitors in a ſucceſſive order from him, ought to be charg'd upon us, as our perſonal ſins; but for the ſame reaſon too a perſonal imputation ought to be made to us, of all their virtues.

IF the texts cited from ſcripture to prove, that we are really born ſinners, on account of the ſin of *Adam*, and liable to be puniſh'd by a juſt and provok'd God, as ſuch, have not ſufficient force to convince us; there are other texts, which ſeem evidently to conclude for the doctrine directly oppoſite. After God had reprimanded the *Iſraelites* for a proverb, which, ill founded as it was, had too generally obtain'd amongſt them, *the fathers have eaten ſowr grapes, and the children's teeth are ſet on edge* ‡‡. He declares in the moſt ſolemn and awful manner, that they ſhall not have occaſion any more to uſe this proverb, and that upon a clear and inconteſtable reaſon of equity. *Behold all ſouls are mine, as the ſoul of the father, ſo alſo the ſoul of the ſon is mine. The ſoul that ſinneth, it ſhall die* *. *The ſon ſhall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither ſhall the father bear the iniquity of the ſon; the righteouſneſs of the righteous ſhall be upon him, and the wickedneſs of the wicked ſhall be upon him* †. The following command given to the *Jews* in the *Moſaick* law, had the ſame equitable foundation. *The fathers ſhall not be put to death for the children, neither ſhall the children be put to death for the fathers; every man ſhall be put to death for his own ſin* ‡.

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* *Rom.* 5. 12. † ỽ. 15. ‡ ỽ. 18. ** ỽ. 19. †† *Heb.* 7. 9, 10. ‡‡ *Ezek.* 18. 2.

IT remains only, ſince the doctrine of the church of *England* in her ninth article, has been explain'd on the other ſide of the queſtion, concerning original ſin; that I ſhould ſay ſomething, in order to reconcile the true ſenſe of that article, with the reaſons before produc'd to ſhew, why man can only be puniſh'd for his own ſin; and eſpecially with the expreſs authorities of ſcripture, above cited: This being the rule whereby, according to the ** determination of the church, all her doctrines ought to be try'd.

Now it is expreſſly aſſerted in the article under conſideration, that *original ſin is the fault or corruption of the nature of every man*; and that, *in every perſon born in the world, it deſerves God's wrath and damnation*. Theſe expreſſions are very ſtrong, both with reſpect to the heinous guilt of original ſin, and the puniſhment juſtly due to it. But as the articles were form'd with a particular view to the ſtate of the controverſies, which were manag'd with much heat at the time of their being compil'd; and in order, ſo much as poſſible, to bring all ſides to a better temper; every expreſſion in them ought not to be taken in the moſt ſtrict and rigid ſenſe: But due regard ſhould be had to ſo pious and charitable a deſign.

WHEN original ſin is therefore expreſſly charg'd as a fault in man, it is ſaid, there is no neceſſity that we ſhould thereby underſtand a fault, in the ſame ſenſe that we do a ſin, under a formal conſideration of it: But as we underſtand any viſible infirmity or defect; on occaſion of our wanting certain powers or qualities; whereof, notwithſtanding, we were originally capable. And this appears the more to be the true intent of the article, as *corruption*, in the uſe of which term both ſides are agreed, is ſubſtituted as a ſynonymous, but ſofter word, to explain what is meant by fault: Which is afterwards affirm'd to conſiſt in this, that *man is very far gone from original righteouſneſs, and is of his own nature inclin'd to evil.*

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* *Ezek.* 18. 4. † ℣. 20. ‡ *Deut.* 24. 16.

** Art. 6.

Neither of which expreſſions, it is thought, neceſſarily infer actual guilt. The loſs, indeed of original righteouſneſs, by occaſion of another perſon's ſin, is a great unhappineſs: But why ſhould any one be thought criminal, without any fault of his own, for being unhappy? Neither is it the firſt tendency or volition to ſin, which may be term'd *inclination* (and without which it is impoſſible to conceive, how man could ever have ſinn'd at all) that renders him really chargeable with ſin; but his after-compliance with thoſe primary motions towards it. Yet I do not ſuppoſe, but that ſuch motions are now both much ſooner excited, and in a more violent manner, than they would have been in a ſtate of innocence. The ſin of *Adam* might, by a natural efficiency, put him into ſuch a diſorder, which would deſtroy the perfect ballance of his conſtitution, that render'd all the motions of his body entirely, and at the inſtant, obſequious to thoſe of his will. This effect might be occaſion'd by a certain fermentation of the blood; in conſequence whereof, by virtue of the admirable laws of union between the ſoul and the body, the ſoul might be more powerfully mov'd or affected by the action of ſenſible objects. And there is no greater difficulty in conceiving, how ſuch a diſorder ſhould be communicated, than how men ſhould now tranſmit a healthy, diſeas'd, or more vigorous conſtitution to their children.

As to what is farther added to explain the nature of original ſin, and to ſhew wherein it conſiſts, that *the fleſh luſteth contrary to the ſpirit.* Theſe words, in the primary deſign of them, rather import the effects of original ſin, operating in adult perſons, than the firſt eſſays of it in children; in whom, except in an improper ſenſe, *the fleſh cannot be ſaid to luſt againſt the ſpirit.*

Again, when original ſin is ſaid to *deſerve God's wrath and damnation*; no more may be underſtood by *wrath* than temporal evils; the proper conſequences of that wrath, which *Adam* perſonally deſerv'd; and which his poſterity are ſtill juſtly condemn'd to feel, the permanent effects of. As to the word *damnation*, there can be no diſpute; it is confeſſedly allow'd to ſignify no more by the apoſtle himſelf, in the firſt * epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, than certain temporary calamities inflicted on that people for their unworthy manner of receiving the Lord's ſupper.

In the clauſe of the article, where 'tis ſaid, *that concupiſcence and luſt hath of itſelf the nature of ſin*; the very expreſſion, could it be underſtood in reference to infants, and not to actual ſinners, ſeems to be mollifying. Had it been ſaid, *that concupiſcence and luſt hath of itſelf the formal nature of ſin*, this had left the ſenſe of the article more clear and determinate on the other ſide. As it is now expreſs'd, the words ſeem very capable of being interpreted, not concerning the primary and natural motions of concupiſcence, which invincibly ariſe in us, and are confeſs'd to be in the regenerate themſelves; but the very firſt tendencies of the will, at the inſtant they are perceiv'd, towards a compliance with them. For if they have formally in themſelves the nature of ſin, the regenerate, in whom by the article they confeſſedly are, would, I take it, with all ſubmiſſion, be, at the ſame time, in a ſanctify'd, and yet properly in a ſinful ſtate.

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* Chap. 11. 29.

There remains yet one material objection againſt the juſtice of providence, which may deſerve to be diſtinctly conſider'd. It is an undeniable concluſion from what has been ſaid before, that rewards, conſider'd properly as ſuch, can only be due upon a free, and puniſhments upon a practicable obedience. And yet it is ſaid, that a great part of mankind ſhall be ſav'd by the power of an irreſiſtible grace; whilſt others, to whom the means of ſalvation are really impracticable, muſt, for that reaſon, neceſſarily periſh. Both theſe aſſertions, without entring into the detail of the controverſy about them, are falſly grounded. The texts produc'd from ſcripture to prove the doctrine of irreſiſtible grace, are much leſs clear and ſufficient to that end, than the texts produc'd on the other ſide, to prove that the operations of grace may be reſiſted. But if we conſider, in point of reaſon, the grounds, upon which theſe two doctrines are ſeparately founded, thoſe alledg'd for the latter of them, are inconteſtably of ſuperior force. For, upon ſuppoſition that the grace of God cannot be reſiſted, all the motives propos'd to men to induce their compliance with it, would be unneceſſary; the freedom of human will, in the nobleſt act it is capable of, would be deſtroy'd; and the good which man does, could not, in any proper ſenſe, be aſcrib'd to his action, as a moral agent, or the ſubject of reward; but wholly, and entirely to the action of God. Yet tho' it muſt be own'd, there are ſeveral reaſons, reſpecting the wiſdom of God, that cannot be reconcil'd with the notion of irreſiſtible grace; the juſtice of God, ſo far as it imports the doing no injury to his creatures, is ſtill ſafe: And if he make them happy, by over-ruling a choice, which would otherways have terminated in their miſery and deſtruction, they will have no reaſon to complain; tho' ſuch a procedure could not be perfectly juſtify'd or accounted for in other reſpects.

The ſeventeenth article of the church has, however, been interpreted to favour the doctrines, both concerning the ſalvation of the elect, by an irreſiſtible power of God's grace; and the excluſion of others, from all capacity of being ſav'd, for want of having

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ving the means of grace diſpens'd, in due meaſure, to them. Neither of which inferences, much leſs the latter of them, can be made from the words of that article. *Predeſtination to life*, as defin'd in it, *is the everlaſting purpoſe of God, whereby, before the foundations of the world were laid, he hath conſtantly decreed by his counſel, ſecret to us, to deliver from curſe and damnation, thoſe whom he hath choſen in Chriſt out of mankind, and to bring them by Chriſt unto everlaſting ſalvation, as veſſels made to honour.* Nothing can neceſſarily be inferr'd from theſe words, but that God foreſeeing the good uſe, which the elect would make of that grace, he had from everlaſting decreed to diſpenſe to them, through *Jeſus Chriſt*, determin'd, at the ſame time, to deliver them from that curſe and damnation, which they would otherways have incurr'd the penalty of; and to bring them by *Chriſt* unto that everlaſting ſalvation, which they could have had no right or pretenſions to, but by virtue of his free and ſole promiſe. The decree therefore, which God made of ſaving the elect, in both theſe reſpects, was not abſolute, or antecedent to any regard he might have to the good or ill uſe they would make of his grace; but in conſequence of his certainly foreſeeing, they would make a good uſe of their liberty, in complying with the motions of it. This procedure of God highly tends to magnify the riches of his goodneſs, without any neceſſity of ſuppoſing his grace irreſiſtible, in order to the ſalvation of men; which would deſtroy, at once, the proper freedom of their wills in a ſtate of probation, with all the reaſons of his commands to them, his expoſtulations with them, and the very end of his propoſing to reward, or threatning to puniſh them. None of which conſiderations can influence or affect us, upon a ſuppoſition, that we are neceſſarily determin'd, in all the inſtances of our duty, by a power, which we are not able to reſiſt.

WHEN 'tis ſaid therefore, that *they which be endow'd with ſo excellent a benefit of God, through grace obey the calling.* This is ſpoken eventually concerning thoſe, to whom the grace of God proves efficacious; but does not in the leaſt imply any neceſſity of its operating upon them after an invincible manner. When 'tis farther ſaid, that *they are juſtify'd freely*, this denotes the order of God's proceeding in qualifying ſinners for eternal ſalvation, by virtue of the free and general overtures of grace made to them, in *Jeſus Chriſt*; but does not ſuppoſe, that God juſtifies them, out of any regard to their particular perſons, excluſive of the good uſe they make of their liberty, in concurrence with the means of grace. Neither ought we to conceive juſtification leſs free, upon thoſe fit and reaſonable conditions pre-requir'd to it. We may, by parity of reaſon, argue, that it leſſens the freedom of any gift from a friend, becauſe it is not forcibly, and whether we will or no, put into our hands, or, in any other violent manner, obtruded upon us. But the concluſion of the article ſeems evidently to determine the ſenſe of the church, as to the point in queſtion. For if we *are to receive God's promiſes in ſuch wiſe, as they are generally held forth to us, in holy ſcripture*; ſince an abſolute decree cannot conſiſt with a conditional promiſe; and the promiſe of eternal life is all along made on condition of faith and repentance, ſo far as words can expreſs a condition; it neceſſarily follows, that the decree of ſaving men muſt be conditional alſo, and ſuch as agrees with the nature of human liberty. A condition, in the very notion of it, implying (for otherways there can be no reaſon of making it) a power in the party to whom it is propos'd, of rejecting or complying with it.

BUT the moſt dangerous doctrine, which men can pretend to infer from this article, or indeed to aſſert upon any other grounds, is that of *preterition*; which, tho' a ſofter name, than that of abſolute reprobation; yet really, in effect, comes to the ſame thing. For where is the difference, as to the event, whether men be excluded by the poſitive will of God (if the very ſuppoſition be not too injurious to the infinite perfections of his nature) from all poſſible means of ſalvation; or left under ſuch circumſtances, not by occaſion of their own fault, but the original tranſgreſſion of *Adam*; that let them do what they can, they muſt in conſequence of their diſobedience, at laſt of neceſſity periſh. In either caſe, there is a notorious and equal violation of the common rules of juſtice, which follow; and whereof the reaſons appear ſo ſtrong and inconteſtable, that they need only be recited, without loſs of time in making any reflections upon them.

1. THE firſt rule of juſtice, that I ſhall mention, hereby violated, is, that no man can deſerve blame or puniſhment, for doing any thing it was impoſſible for him to avoid; or for omitting to do any thing, whereof he was altogether incapable: Provided eſpecially, that he have not brought himſelf under ſuch circumſtances, by any antecedent abuſe of his liberty.

2. THAT no man can be charg'd with the abuſe of any talent, which he never receiv'd; or puniſh'd under a notion of his falſifying a truſt, that was never committed to him.

3. THAT obedience cannot be requir'd, where the power of obeying is taken away, or was never conferr'd.

4. THAT where there is a neceſſary determination of the will to one part, there can be no crime in not chuſing the better part.

IT muſt be acknowledg'd, all theſe rules are but ſo many different ways of expreſſing the ſame thing. They are, however, proper, by being mention'd diſtinctly, to affect perſons more or leſs, according to the different manner of their apprehending ſuch truths, or the order, wherein they have been accuſtom'd to meditate upon them.

THE only anſwer to be given to this charge, is, that it does not affect thoſe who aſſert abſolute reprobation; becauſe God determin'd to give even the reprobate ſuch a meaſure of his grace, as would be ſufficient, in a due uſe of their liberty, to convert them: So that they are ſtill left, and that upon a principle of juſtice, without excuſe. But how can we think that grace ſufficient, or really deſign'd to be ſo, which in a ſucceſſion of ſo many ages, and after innumerable tryals, has never in one inſtance taken effect? According to our ways of judging, concerning the ſufficiency of men, conſider'd as moral or artificial agents in other caſes, this evaſion muſt appear altogether groundleſs. But allowing that a meaſure of divine grace, which, in ſo many millions of inſtances, never attain'd the end for which it was given, was yet ſufficient of itſelf towards the attainment of it; this muſt be granted, that there was, and is ſtill, a poſſibility at leaſt of attaining it; and ſo there will be an abſolute and unfruſtrable decree aſſerted, and yet in dependence on a condition, which may, perhaps, after all, fruſtrate the execution of it; which is, in other words, to aſſert that a thing may be poſſible, and yet, at the ſame time, abſolutely impoſſible.

BUT let us ſuppoſe, what, for reaſons concerning both the juſtice and holineſs, the goodneſs and wiſdom of God, ought not to be granted; that a great part of mankind are under an abſolute decree, and, antecedently to their doing good or evil, of eternal damnation; yet this can by no means follow from the words of the article, which wholly relate to the methods of divine grace in ſaving the elect, without defining any thing concerning reprobation; or ſo much as making the leaſt mention of it. It is ſaid, indeed, that *God has decreed to deliver from curſe and damnation thoſe, whom he hath choſen in Chriſt out of mankind, by means of his Spirit working in them.* But even admitting that the Holy Spirit ſhould operate in ſuch perſons by an irreſiſtible power of his grace, how does it therefore follow, that thoſe, who are not ſo choſen, are left in a reprobate ſtate, without any poſſible means of deliverance from damnation? Since it may be in their power to eſcape it, by a due improvement of the common and ordinary means of grace, ſufficient, tho' not of themſelves abſolutely or univerſally efficacious to that end.

THIS conſideration leads me to obviate another difficulty that has been ſtarted in relation to the juſtice of providence, from the very different and unequal meaſures, whereby the means of ſalvation appear to be diſtributed to mankind. Tho' indeed what is here objected does not ſo properly affect the juſtice, as the goodneſs and other moral perfections of God. All we contend for, is, that the juſtice of God requires, he ſhould afford men the neceſſary means of performing that obedience, to which eternal life is promis'd; or, upon failure whereof, eternal damnation is inevitably conſequent. But how far he will afford men more or greater aſſiſtances, than are requiſite to this end, depends upon the free determination of his will, without any regard to the meaſures of ſtrict juſtice. He does no man injury, by being more liberal in the diſtribution of his favours to another. All grounds of complaint are remov'd, if every one receive ſo much as he has any right to expect; tho' we may hope ſtill *better things* from the goodneſs of God, *and things which* more effectually promote and *accompany ſalvation*.

BUT how then do we reconcile ſuch unequal meaſures of divine grace, with the expreſs declarations of God, that *his ways are equal*; and that *he is no reſpecter of perſons?* It is ſufficient to ſay, that both theſe expreſſions refer to the methods of God's juſtice in dealing with men, and not to thoſe of his goodneſs. Tho' all men are not equally favour'd; yet they are equally free from all unjuſt treatment. No one can ſay, whether he have more or fewer talents committed to him, provided he be capable of profiting with them, that he has any injury done him. And therefore we may obſerve, that the prohibitions in ſcripture againſt reſpect of perſons wholly relate to judicial proceedings; or ſuch duties, as in our more private capacity, we are in juſtice oblig'd to perform towards other men. *Ye ſhall do no unrighteouſneſs in judgment. Thou ſhalt not reſpect the perſon of the poor, nor honour the perſon of the mighty; but in righteouſneſs ſhalt thou judge thy neighbour* [*]. *Ye ſhall not reſpect the perſons in judgment; but you ſhall hear the ſmall as well as the great. You ſhall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's* [†]. Who *is no reſpecter of perſons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteouſneſs, is accepted of him* [‡]. For, *without reſpect of perſons, he judgeth according to every man's work* [**].

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[*] *Lev.* 19. 15.
[†] *Deut.* 1. 17.
[‡] *Acts* 10. 34.
[**] 1 *Pet.* 1. 17.

Tho' I have ſaid nothing on ſo proper an occaſion, in reference to the ſalvable ſtate of the heathen; yet it will undeniably follow from the principles which have been laid down, that we ought, in honour to the divine juſtice, to believe them, if not in a ſtate of that ſalvation, which is promis'd to chriſtians (and which there is reaſon to ſuppoſe may be peculiar to chriſtians) yet in ſuch a ſtate at leaſt, wherein they are not under any neceſſity of periſhing, or of being more miſerable, than if they had never been; wherein, to conclude, God requires nothing of them, upon the ſanction of any rewards or puniſhments, but what they are capable in a competent meaſure of performing.

Chap. VI.

That God is holy in all the diſpenſations of his providence.

We have prov'd, that holineſs is an eſſential attribute of God; and it is neceſſary, that all his external works ſhould bear the character of his attributes. They are concluſions therefore equally evident, from our conſulting the moral perfections of his nature, that *the Lord is righteous in all his ways; and holy in all his works.*

In treating of the adminiſtration of providence, with reſpect to this latter attribute, I propoſe to enquire,

I. Wherein the proper acts of it, may be ſuppos'd to conſiſt: And,

II. What are the principal objections, which may appear to lie againſt what I ſhall aſſert concerning it.

I. It is neceſſary that a holy God, in governing mankind, ſhould preſcribe them ſuch a rule of life, as is agreeable to the nature of holineſs, and may have a proper tendence to promote it. That he has preſcrib'd ſuch a rule, is evident from the light of our minds, both as it diſcovers itſelf in the way of reaſon and reflection. For we need only conſult it, either in order to know what is fit and reaſonable to be done; or, if we have already proceeded to action; whether we have acted as we ought, and according to the order and perfection of our nature. A practice conformable to theſe rules, does alſo highly conduce to recommend piety to others, and advance the intereſts of it in the world.

But the holy ſcriptures bear the cleareſt teſtimony to the holineſs of God, in his conduct towards mankind, on all theſe accounts. We are aſſur'd in them, *that every word of God is pure*; that *his precepts are true and righteous altogether*; that *his law is holy, and his commandment holy, and juſt, and good*; that *there is a law written on the hearts of all men*; according as they act in obedience to which, or tranſgreſs it, *their conſciences bear witneſs, and they ſtand accus'd, or elſe excus'd by their own thoughts*. But this law being, in many reſpects, obſcure, and in ſome deficient, towards attaining the great ends of holineſs; God has, by a ſpecial revelation, given us a *more ſure word of prophecy*, and *form of ſound words*, at once to direct and influence our practice; to the end we may be holy, both in our more private capacities, and *in all godly converſation and honeſty*, to the edification of others.

THE holineſs of providence conſiſts not only in preſcribing the rules of holy living, but in affording men all the neceſſary means, and aſſiſtances to that end. This, ſuppoſing God to have any wiſe deſign in the rules he preſcribes, is a neceſſary conſequence: For otherways, how well ſoever they may be adapted in themſelves to produce or promote holineſs, they could not poſſibly operate. How far this conſideration may affect the holineſs of God, with reſpect to the ſtate of the heathen world, will preſently be conſider'd. It muſt be allow'd, that as to chriſtians, they have the means of holineſs diſpens'd to them after ſo liberal and powerful a manner, by the advantages of a ſtanding revelation, a ſtanding miniſtry, the uſe of the ſacraments; and the aſſiſtances of a ſpecial grace; that it ſeems a queſtion of much greater difficulty to reſolve, why all of them are not more holy, than why the reſt of the world are generally ſo corrupt.

THE holineſs of providence requires farther, that there ſhould be proper motives, as well as means, towards rendring men holy. For no action can be reaſonable which we are not, upon one conſideration or other, induc'd to undertake. And in proportion as what we have in view is more affecting, or of greater importance to our intereſts, the more active and aſſiduous we ſhall ſtill be in purſuit of it. Now, tho' all mankind, from a conſideration of God's juſt retributions to be diſpens'd to wicked and good men in another life; and from their obſerving, that he frequently takes occaſion *to make himſelf known by the judgment which he executes in this life*, have ſufficient motives, (beſides thoſe taken from that variety of inſtances, wherein his goodneſs is every day exemplify'd) to be holy and obedient; yet it muſt be confeſs'd, that thoſe motives are much ſtronger under the chriſtian diſpenſation, both as to the nature, and, in many reſpects, the brighter evidence of them, than they are to men in a pure ſtate of natural religion. But 'tis ſufficient to vindicate the holineſs of providence, if ſuch perſons have all the motives to obedience afforded them, proper to the ſtate they are in, and of ſufficient force to induce it. What is more than ſufficient to this end, does not depend ſo much upon our conſidering, what a holy God is oblig'd to do, as what a wiſe and good God may think fit to do.

II. I ſhall in the next place conſider ſome of the principal objections, which appear to lie againſt what has been ſaid concerning the holineſs of providence.

It is pretended in the firſt place, that the concurrence of God being neceſſary to all the actions of men, we cannot well reconcile it with the holineſs of his providence, that he ſhould concur with them towards any ſinful actions. And therefore that the rules of holineſs, whether preſcrib'd by the natural law of our minds, or by the poſitive and reveal'd will of God, are to be attributed to ſome other principle; to his wiſdom probably or goodneſs; as the practice of virtue tends moſt effectually to preſerve order, and all the other wiſe and good ends of government in the world. But the premiſes from which this inference is drawn, being ill founded, it muſt unavoidably fall with them.

We grant in general, that God concurs towards preſerving the nature of things, with their ſeveral faculties, and the functions for which they were made: But why ſhould it be thought impoſſible, that, in conſequence of thoſe faculties and functions, God Almighty may not render them capable, in many reſpects, of modifying themſelves, and of acting not independently of him (for he can overrule and reſtrain them when, and after what manner he pleaſes;) but by virtue of that general power, which was communicated to them, when they were originally form'd. So long as they can neither ſubſiſt in being, nor operate, but in ſubordination to the will of God, where is the injury done to any perfection of his nature, in ſuppoſing they may act of themſelves (I ſpeak here only of intelligent beings) by virtue of a power deriv'd from him? It ſeems rather injurious to his attribute of omnipotence to ſay, that ſuch a power is, in the nature of the thing, impoſſible; except they, who deny the poſſibility of it, could prove, what they will never be able to do, that a contradiction is imply'd in the very idea of it.

I know there are ſome, who think a poſitive act of God's concurrence neceſſary, both towards the actions and volitions of men, and yet would evade the conſequence, which charges him with being the author of ſin; by ſaying, that he concurs towards all the actions and volitions of men materially, but not formally conſider'd. But this appears to others a ſubtle, rather than a clear or ſolid diſtinction of the ſchools. For whatever becomes of the actions of men; yet as to their volitions, wherein the very formality of ſin lies, there can be no imaginable grounds for it. If man cannot will or intend any ſinful action, without God's actuating his will and intention, it ſeems neceſſarily to follow, that the obliquity of it muſt equally, at leaſt, be aſcrib'd to God, as a partial; if not principally as the firſt and moving cauſe.

THE inſtances, made uſe of, to illuſtrate the manner of God's concourſe towards the ſinful actions of men, from our cauſing any lame creatures to walk, are not pertinent. For firſt, their lameneſs is pre-ſuppos'd to our putting them in motion; but this gives no account of the principal difficulty in the caſe, and upon which the deciſion of it in a manner wholly depends; how *Adam*, in a ſtate of innocence, was originally excited to commit ſin. But, ſecondly, if ſome account could be given, how man, who, according to this illuſtration, is now ſuppos'd lame, came at firſt to be ſo; if his lameneſs proceeded from the ſame cauſe with his power to walk, then he who excites him to walk, and without whom he can have no motion, is alſo apparently the cauſe of his going lame. I ſhall only add, that creatures, which are lame, are in that reſpect wholly paſſive; but to ſay the will of man is wholly paſſive, or determin'd by the action of God, is not to make God concur towards what man wills, but to all intents and purpoſes to will, what man is only ſaid to will himſelf. A will without any power at all of motion or action, is ſuch a will, as I do not ſee how men of the moſt metaphyſical heads, can poſſibly diſtinguiſh from no will.

THIS account of the origin of ſin, from that natural power, wherewith man was created, of abuſing his freedom, perfectly ſolves a difficulty, which has been often objected; that in order to explain how moral evil was firſt caus'd and propagated in the world, it is neceſſary we ſhould ſuppoſe an evil principle eternally co-exiſtent with a holy and good God. For 'tis but aſſerting that when God had made man a free agent, he would not deſtroy his own work, but leave him to the natural uſe of his freedom; and then the principal ground of this objection is entirely remov'd. Tho' it muſt not be diſſembled, that the *Manichees* carry'd it ſtill farther, and argued not ſo much from the impoſſibility of the thing, that an all-powerful God could create man with a capacity of determining himſelf to good or evil; as upon ſuppoſition, that if this had been really poſſible; yet a holy God would not have exerted his power to that end; ſince he foreſaw the ill conſequences, in fact, of endowing men with ſuch a capacity.

THIS is the argument wherein the chief ſtrength of the *Manichees* appears to lie. I ſhall endeavour to give a diſtinct and ſatisfactory anſwer to it, by laying down theſe following propoſitions.

1. THAT the abuſe which God foreſaw man would make of his liberty, was not neceſſary in the order of natural cauſes, but purely accidental; which perfectly frees God from the charge, at leaſt, of being intentionally the author of ſin.

2. AT the ſame time God created man with a capacity of committing ſin, he gave him a law, both of reaſon and conſcience, that laid very powerful reſtraints upon him from ſinning; which proves farther, that ſin, when originally committed, was directly contrary to the intention of God.

3. HAD God created man impeccable, he could not have been capable, on account of his obedience, of reward or puniſhment, of blame or praiſe. For obedience, upon all theſe conſiderations, muſt be ſuppos'd to proceed, not from neceſſity, but choice. Fire is in as proper a ſenſe capable of being rewarded or puniſh'd, of being blam'd or prais'd, for aſcending, as a man for doing, what he is by a natural cauſality abſolutely determin'd to do. So far then as God had any wiſe reaſons in theſe motives to obedience, ſo far was it neceſſary that man ſhould be free in the ſeveral inſtances of his obedience. *Simplicius* reaſons excellently to this purpoſe, in a paſſage, which I ſhall here recite, as render'd from him by a learned * author. "Had God, to prevent man's ſin, taken "away the liberty of his will, he had likewiſe deſtroy'd the foun-"dation of all virtue, and the very nature of man. For virtue "would not have been ſuch, had there been no poſſibility of act-"ing contrary to the rules of it; and man's nature would have "been divine, becauſe impeccable. In which notion the ſchoolmen are entirely agreed with him; for they argue, that whatever has not infinite perfection, is in ſome reſpect imperfect, and what is imperfect, may be deficient or faulty in its operations: If this argument be good, either God muſt have determin'd not to create man at all, nor any other intelligent being; or to create them capable of making default. But this philoſopher proceeds, "there-"fore, tho' we attribute this ſelf-determining power to God, as "the author of it; which was ſo neceſſary in the order of the uni-"verſe, we have no reaſon to attribute the origin of that evil to "God, which comes by the abuſe of that liberty. For, as he "farther adds, God does not at all cauſe that averſion from good, "which is in the ſoul when it ſins, but only gave ſuch a power to

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* Orig. ſacr. p. 327.

“ the ſoul, whereby it might turn itſelf to evil; out of which God
“ might afterwards produce ſo much good, which could not
“ otherways have been without it.

4. Had God created man capable of ſin, and yet continually reſtrain'd him by a preventing grace from ſinning, he had given him a capacity without a poſſibility, at the ſame time, of his ever making any uſe or application of it; and conſequently without deſigning any reaſonable end by it. But to ſuppoſe this, is much more difficultly reconcileable with the wiſdom of God, than his permitting men the uſe of thoſe powers he had given them, is with his holineſs. To which we may add, that not only his wiſdom (on the contrary) but alſo his juſtice and mercy are eminently diſcover'd by the effects of ſuch a permiſſion. His wiſdom, in fruſtrating the deſigns of wicked men; or where he ſuffers them to ſucceed, in making them ſubſervient to ſuch good, and, many times, holy ends, as they leaſt thought of or intended. Eſpecially in his contriving that admirable method of ſaving ſinners, by the incarnation of his ſon. His juſtice, in requiring an attonement for ſin; and his mercy, in extending the virtue and benefits of it to all men. Whereas had man never ſinn'd, there could have been no poſſible occaſion for the exerciſe of either of theſe attributes; for then juſtice could neither have puniſh'd, nor mercy, in any caſe, interpos'd, to prevent puniſhment.

Now in the queſtion, upon a difficulty, where ſeveral of the divine attributes are affected, it is reaſonable, we ſhould not only examine what the honour of any one of them may, in particular, ſeem to require; but what tends moſt evidently to ſerve the great ends, or advance the glory of them, in general.

5. If there be ſtill ſome difficulty, after all, in accounting, how a holy God could create any being capable of ſinning, or of permitting the actual commiſſion of ſin; yet the difficulty, on the other ſide, which attributes the origin of ſin to an evil principle, ſelf-exiſtent and co-eternal with the good principle, muſt be allow'd much greater. For how can that principle be God, which has not infinite power, which cannot govern the world, or prevent thoſe evils, that another power may think fit to put intelligent beings, his own creatures, upon doing in it. The ſuppoſition of God's permitting ſin, certainly cannot be ſo injurious to his holineſs, as the ſuppoſition of his being forc'd to permit it, is to his power and ſovereignty. But ſuch a doctrine indeed does not terminate in the deſtruction of any particular attribute of God, but of all his attributes at once; by deſtroying the very proofs of his exiſtence, from the idea of infinite perfection.

Now where the reaſons of a known and acknowledg'd fact are controverted, thoſe, without queſtion, ought to preponderate, which are attended with the feweſt inconveniences; or which are not liable to ſo many and great difficulties, as the arguments produc'd on the other ſide.

A ſecond objection againſt the holineſs of providence, is grounded upon a pretence, that God has not afforded men ſufficient means of avoiding ſin. He has requir'd indeed obedience of them, but left them in a ſtate of ignorance or diſorder, which renders them incapable of obeying. I need ſay nothing in anſwer to this objection, ſo far as it concerns chriſtians. The promiſe of a ſupernatural grace, with all the other ſtanding and ordinary means of ſalvation, upon the bare mentioning of them, perfectly acquits the holineſs of God, from any charge of this nature. But with reſpect to the blind and corrupt ſtate of the heathen world, it may be thought to have a more reaſonable foundation. Notwithſtanding the light of the goſpel, the greateſt part of mankind are ſtill obſerv'd to *ſit in darkneſs and the ſhadow of death.* If their errors in point of doctrine be very groſs and abſurd, their morals are no leſs vitiated. Nay, they many times practiſe the moſt horrid and abominable crimes, even upon principle, and a pretence of conſcience.

However this objection may be exaggerated, by general reflections, or a recital of the groſs errors or vices, that obtain ſo commonly in the heathen world; yet the whole force of it lies in this, that God does not reſtrain men by an immediate interpoſition of his power, from running into thoſe vices, which are naturally conſequent to the ill uſe they make of their liberty. As it has been prov'd before, from the reaſons and ends upon which God made men free agents, that his holineſs does not oblige him to deſtroy or over-rule their freedom; ſo 'tis ſufficient for the vindication of this attribute, that God affords all men ſufficient means, if they will but duly conſult and follow them, from the natural light of their minds; or, where that is more obſcur'd, from the aſſiſtances of a common grace, to eſcape the common corruption. And accordingly there have been very few nations in the world, if any, ſo wholly corrupt, wherein certain perſons have not diſtinguiſh'd themſelves, in many reſpects, by the practice of a more ſtrict and refin'd morality.

If it ſtill be ſaid, that tho' particular perſons may, by an abuſe of their liberty, be juſtly depriv'd of that light, and thoſe aſſiſtances, which, through the divine goodneſs, other perſons enjoy the benefit of; yet it does not ſeem ſo agreeable to the holineſs of God, that he ſhould leave whole nations in that ſtate of ignorance and diſorder, wherein we behold them, without interpoſing, by a ſpecial grace, to recover them out of it. It may be reply'd, that if the holineſs of God abſolutely requir'd him to enlighten the minds, or reſtrain the wills of men, it would require him to do it in all caſes, and at all times. Whether therefore he ſhould ſo enlighten and reſtrain a greater or a leſs number of men, whole nations or particular perſons, is a conſideration not ſtrictly relating to his holineſs, but to his other attributes, which yet never interfere with it, of wiſdom, goodneſs, or juſtice.

WHAT is objected, in the laſt place, againſt the holineſs of God's providence, from his not affording men ſufficient motives to obedience, is ſtill of leſs weight and importance. One of thoſe motives, and which is common to all men in every ſtate and condition of life, ariſes from the inward conſciouſneſs of their own minds; which never fail, when they attend to the judgment or deciſion of them, to reproach them for what they do ill, or to applaud and encourage them in well-doing. Another motive to obedience, and which is ſo very proper in the nature of it, to *lead men to repentance*, is founded on a conſideration of the goodneſs of God; which all parts of the world indifferently experience the conſtant effects of: Whether we conſider him as diſplaying it in acts of beneficence to his creatures; or of his patience and long-ſuffering towards ſinners. For, *he is good to all; and his tender mercies are over all his works.* The apprehenſions of incurring the diſpleaſure of God by our offences againſt him, and the hopes of ſecuring a ſpecial intereſt in his favour, by faithfully endeavouring to ſerve him, are alſo very powerful motives to obedience, and which in general affect, or ought ſenſibly to affect every man living.

BUT the great motive of all, to mention no other (whereby mankind are generally, and all conſiderate perſons moſt effectually influenc'd) is taken from the belief of a judgment to come, and of that juſt retribution, which will one day be made to all men, according to their good or evil actions in this life. And this belief, which may properly be term'd catholick, is every where ſo deeply radicated, that it is not without good and ſenſible effects, even upon thoſe ignorant perſons, who are leſs able to account diſtinctly for the reaſons, upon which it is founded.

IT muſt be acknowledg'd, that all theſe conſiderations operate more powerfully upon chriſtians; and there are others of great importance towards promoting holineſs, peculiar to them. But ſo long as thoſe I have mention'd, are in their own nature, generally conſider'd, ſufficient to engage the obedience of all men, and to leave them inexcuſable for not attending to the natural force, or purſuing the natural deſign of them; the holineſs of God in the diſpenſations of his providence towards all men, is ſtill ſafe, and the ſuperior advantages, which chriſtians enjoy above the reſt of the world, are not to be conſider'd, as properly reſpecting this attribute; but, what I am in the next place proceeding to treat of, the goodneſs of providence.

Chap. VII.

That the goodneſs of God is conſpicuous in all the diſpenſations of his providence.

I Shall have the leſs occaſion to enlarge on this head, in regard of what has been ſaid of the goodneſs of God, conſider'd as an eſſential perfection of his nature, and of thoſe incidental reflections, which have been made concerning the goodneſs of providence in the two chapters foregoing.

In general, the goodneſs of God conſiſts in the preſervation of the ſeveral creatures he has made, both as to their being, their proper functions, and order; but more eſpecially in his preſerving ſuch of his creatures, in theſe ſeveral reſpects, who experience the more ſenſible effects of his goodneſs; and to whom he not only affords the neceſſary ſupports, but many comforts and conveniences ſubſervient to the greater happineſs of life. Upon which account are thoſe pious ejaculations of the holy penmen. *The earth is full of the goodneſs of the Lord* *. *He is the Lord who exerciſeth loving-kindneſs in the earth* †. So that all the reaſonable world, without diſtinction, are under continual, and yet, on many accounts, new and freſh engagements, to *praiſe the Lord for his goodneſs, and declare the wonders, that he doth for the children of men.* Tho' his goodneſs is ſtill more eminently conſpicuous to thoſe, for whom he has, in a more liberal manner, provided all things, not only pertaining *to life, but godlineſs:* Eſpecially, under the laſt conſideration, ſuch of them, as are the peculiar objects of his goodneſs and loving-kindneſs, in the methods of his redeeming the world by *Jeſus Chriſt*.

There can be no diſpute then, concerning the goodneſs of providence to men; who do but conſider, what they, and all the world, ſee and feel, and taſte every day. As *God is* eſſentially

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* *Pſalm* 33. 5.

† *Jer.* 9. 24.

good, it is no leſs evident from all theſe ſenſible effects, that he *does good*. The great objection lies againſt the unequal diſpenſations of his providence to mankind, in reference to the ſtate of religion among them; that being a conſideration, which is of the laſt, or rather of infinite importance to them. There are, however, ſome objections againſt the goodneſs of providence, more immediately reſpecting the temporal bleſſings or evils of life, of which it may not be improper for me previouſly to take notice.

1. IT is ſaid, that the bleſſings and evils of this life, are diſpens'd after a very unequal manner, and, as it were, with a careleſs hand. In certain caſes, eſpecially, the deſigns of goodneſs do not appear in ſo full and diſtinct a light, as might be expected. While ſome men flow in wealth and plenty, are ſurrounded with all the external pomp, and have all the pleaſures of life at command; others, without any viſible cauſe for ſuch a diſcrimination, are expos'd to the miſery and hardſhips, not only of an indigent, but of a ſervile, and what is thought many times, for that reaſon, a deſpicable condition.

ALL this, ſo far as the goodneſs of providence is concern'd in it, amounts to no more, but that God has put the generality of mankind under an abſolute neceſſity of labour and induſtry towards providing for themſelves or their dependents, the ordinary ſupports of life. For as to the other inconveniences of contempt or diſgrace, ſuppos'd to attend poverty, they are not the proper, but only accidental conſequences of it. And tho' a ſervile condition is not in general deſirable, yet the circumſtances of it are often much eaſier, and, for that reaſon, more eligible than thoſe of poor people, who, as to their conduct, are notwithſtanding more independent.

So that the only thing to be conſider'd, in anſwer to the objection, is, why all men are not born to a ſtate of idleneſs. An objection, which is ſo far from being well-founded, that had all men been born to ſuch a ſtate, the difficulty of accounting for the goodneſs of divine providence, would have been much ſtronger on the other ſide. For how many of the conveniences and beauties of civil life, are owing to the invention and improvement of arts and ſciences, or other continual effects of human induſtry? How much evil is prevented in the world by the obligation men are under, for their neceſſary, or more commodious ſubſiſtence, of minding *their own buſineſs; and working with their hands, the thing that is good?* Even in private life, nothing is more pernicious to man, whether conſider'd in his natural or moral capacity, than a perfect ſtate of eaſe or inaction. The ill effects it has as to the more irregular and vicious frame, both of his body and mind, are very ſignificantly expreſs'd in that obſervation of *Solomon. I went by the field of the ſlothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of underſtanding; and behold, it was all grown over with thorns; and nettles had cover'd the face thereof**. In ſhort, were it not for the truth of two maxims, which the ſame author has left us, that *the hand of the diligent maketh rich*; and, that *in all labour there is profit*; the world, under what denomination ſoever we conſider it, would be a ſcene of miſery and diſorder; which we ſhould find our ſelves much more at a loſs to reconcile with the goodneſs of providence, than the many difficulties and hardſhips, which 'tis pretended ſo great a number of men are at preſent expos'd to in it.

It is not only neceſſary for the good of the community, and, on many accounts, for their own good, that a great part of mankind ſhould be under a neceſſity of *working and eating their own bread*; but conſidering the different deſigns, intereſts and capacities of men; except God were continually to exert a miraculous power in deſtroying the nature, the common courſe, and order of things, there is an abſolute impoſſibility, that it ſhould be otherways.

Now where, at once, the nature of things, and, in ſeveral reſpects, the very reaſons of goodneſs require, that there ſhould be that diſcrimination in the circumſtances of men, which is complain'd of; why ſhould it, notwithſtanding, be objected againſt the goodneſs of providence? Eſpecially, ſince no man ſuffers ſo much, but the advantages of life, which therefore eaſily reconcile him to his condition in it, are ſtill greater, in proportion, than his ſufferings. If there are ſome who apprehend death, and even, if that were poſſible, annihilation itſelf more eligible than life; this is a conſideration, which does not affect the goodneſs, but perhaps the juſtice of providence. For how good ſoever God may be in his providential diſpenſations towards men; this can be no reaſon why his juſtice, when provok'd, ſhould not take place in its own province; and where the wiſe or good ends of government may alſo particularly require, that in leaving men to the natural conſequences of their ſins, it ſhould take place.

The preference of death to a more unhappy ſtate of life, may at other times proceed from ſome very ſenſible diſturbance, which occaſions, in the event, a diſtraction of mind. And therefore 'tis ordinarily thought a ſufficient reaſon to prove, that a man, who has made away with himſelf, was really diſtracted. But diſtraction not being a moral evil, it will not in the leaſt prove, eſpecially if we take in the regards of another life, that either a perſon under it, or who has felt the worſt effects of it, is really, all things conſider'd, more miſerable than happy; or that, upon the whole matter, *it had been better for ſuch a one, that he had never been born.*

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* *Prov.* 24. 30, 31.

DEATH may ſometimes too appear preferable to men, under a due ſubmiſſion to God's will, from a deſire of paſſing into a future, more perfect, and unchangeable ſtate of happineſs. But the very reaſons of this deſire being founded in the goodneſs of providence; certainly it cannot, with the leaſt ſhew or pretence of reaſon, be objected againſt the goodneſs of providence.

As to that part of the objection relating to thoſe ſuperior advantages of life, which the rich and fortunate enjoy above the poor or diſtreſs'd, they are evidently, tho' intended as a charge againſt the divine goodneſs, yet rather arguments of it; but of a goodneſs, whoſe acts are entirely free; and which God, who may do with his own as he will, diſtributes to what perſons, or in what meaſure he pleaſes; without the leaſt injury or cauſe of complaint to other men: Who yet enjoy more by favour of his good providence, than they are conſcious to themſelves, they in any kind deſerve.

2. THERE are ſome evils objected againſt the goodneſs of providence, that are incident to mankind in general. Among theſe are enumerated, with all the aggravating circumſtances whereof they are capable, diſeaſes and death, wars, peſtilence, famine and earthquakes, the raging of the elements, of the ſea in particular, with *the madneſs of the people.* To which, tho' a diſtinct anſwer might ſeverally be given, it is ſufficient, upon the whole matter, to ſay, that, according to the preſent ſtate of things, without the conſtant interpoſition of a miraculous power, which the goodneſs of God does not oblige him to exert, and which it does not conſiſt with his wiſdom that he ſhould exert; all theſe evils muſt, in the order of natural cauſes, unavoidably happen. Where God brings them upon men, as he frequently does, by a poſitive or ſpecial appointment; the reaſons of his governing the world, with the beneficial effects of theſe evils themſelves to mankind, collectively conſider'd, require that they ſhould be inflicted; particularly, in order towards preventing too great an encreaſe of people in the world, and preſerving in the minds of men a more awful ſenſe of the divine power and juſtice.

THE death of infants, ſo ſoon as they are born into the world, or before the ends for which they are born, appear to be in any competent meaſure accompliſh'd, is thought an objection that has ſomething peculiar in it. But we need only propoſe the following conſiderations to diſarm it of all its force; that, it is not neceſſary God ſhould always over-rule the natural tendency of ſecond cauſes; that, yet conſidering the many dangerous accidents incident to childhood, 'tis reaſonable to believe, he prevents a great many more of them, than he permits; that the life of children, if continued to them, would not perhaps be of that conſequence, either to the benefit of the publick, or to the ſatisfaction or intereſts of their parents, which is apprehended; that parents prove ſometimes very unhappy in the diſappointments or diſtreſs, even of the moſt promiſing and dutiful children; that young princes, in whoſe life or death whole nations are intereſted; and who, from the firſt eſſays of thoſe great and ſhining qualities, which draw the eyes of the world upon them, raiſe the moſt aſſur'd expectations of their future glory and atchievements; may yet, in favour to themſelves, be taken away from the evil to come (for the beſt princes are not always the moſt happy) or even perhaps in favour to the people; to whom the very goodneſs of a prince ſometimes proves the accidental occaſion of great misfortunes. That, ſince time and change happen to all, and there is ſo great uncertainty as to all human events; it is much better for us, that the power of life and death ſhould be in the hands of God, than that it ſhould depend, in reſpect to thoſe we have the neareſt or greateſt intereſt in, upon our own option. In a word; that we are not to judge concerning the goodneſs of providence from particular events, but the general ends and views of it; which, amidſt ſo various a combination of cauſes, may ſometimes be beſt ſerv'd by thoſe methods, which appear to us moſt foreign and unaccountable.

But the anſwer, which removes all difficulties at once, on occaſion of the greateſt evils in this world, in what kind or degree, or on what perſons ſoever inflicted, is taken from the conſideration of another life; wherein we ſhall be perfectly ſatisfy'd, that they were all *meant* to us *for good*; ſo far as we were proper objects of goodneſs: But if we ſuffer'd them as the proper effects of juſtice, then they do not relate to the preſent, but to a former article; wherein, ſo far as any appearance of a charge can be drawn from them againſt the divine providence, it has been ſufficiently obviated.

The difficulty in relation to the goodneſs of providence, that has been moſt perplexing, and given the greateſt uneaſineſs even to the minds of good men, ariſes from the unequal diſpenſations of grace, and the means of religion, to the world. If a holy God may, conſiſtently with the infinite perfections of his nature, preſerve to men the natural powers, wherewith he originally endow'd dow'd them, and ſo permit ſin, or moral evil, in the world; yet as he willeth not the death of a ſinner, but that all men ſhould be ſav'd; it might be hop'd from his goodneſs, that he would indifferently afford all men the means of avoiding ſin, and *working out their own ſalvation*, that can poſſibly conſiſt with the nature of human liberty.

How great ſoever this difficulty may be thought, it admits of a clear and eaſy ſolution, and in few words. For, firſt, we may reply to it, upon this general and inconteſted principle, that acts of goodneſs are arbitrary; and that God is not oblig'd to diſpenſe his ſpiritual favours to all men, or, ſtrictly ſpeaking, to any man; for then they would not, contrary to the very ſuppoſition of thoſe, by whom the difficulty is objected, be acts of grace; but, in a proper ſenſe, of juſtice or debt. But, beſides this conſideration, it may be ſaid, that God may ſometimes deny thoſe aſſiſtances of grace, even upon a pure motive of goodneſs, which yet his goodneſs eminently diſcovers itſelf in affording to others: And that is, when he foreſees they will receive it in vain, or not make that good uſe and improvement of it, which others do; and thereby render themſelves more ſeverely accountable and obnoxious to his juſtice; which is never more irritated, than by a contempt of mercies receiv'd, and generally riſes in proportion to the meaſures of them.

It is not then an objection againſt the goodneſs of providence, but an argument of it, that God ſo unequally diſpenſes his grace, or the means of religion to men; ſeeing, on occaſion of his proceeding with them after this manner, it will be more tolerable at the day of judgment for ſome perſons, for whole cities, and nations, collectively taken, than otherways it would have been. They, to whom the talents of divine grace are in any extraordinary meaſure committed, have reaſon to be thankful for ſo high a truſt, and the opportunities of improving it to their greater advantage. They, to whom fewer talents have been given, are in general leſs accountable; but have no account at all to render, or returns to make, for thoſe, which they never receiv'd.

The objections, in particular, againſt the goodneſs of providence, from the many ſufferings and afflictions of good men in this life, may all be anſwer'd upon one or more of the foregoing principles; without my deſcending to enlarge on the ſeveral beneficial ends, which providence may be ſuppos'd to have in them; for the trial of their faith, or to diſcover the greater power of it towards confirming the faith of others; or in order to correct ſome ſecret errors and eſcapes, which they have been guilty of. For there are few men ſo good, who are not conſcious to themſelves,

ſelves, they deſerve what they ſuffer; and perhaps, if they duly attend to the occaſion and nature of their ſufferings, upon what account. Laſtly, not to enumerate all the reaſons which have been alledg'd for the ſufferings of good men in this life, and even with great force and evidence by many of the heathen moraliſts, particularly by *Seneca* and *Plutarch*; there is one reaſon, for the goodneſs of God in them, founded on the authority of an expreſs revelation. Which perfectly removes all ſcruples at once, that can ariſe in our minds concerning them. Namely, that they are deſign'd, in the event, *to work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*; *to which they are not at preſent worthy to be compar'd.* Tho' they are not indeed, even in this life, without thoſe inward conſolations, which highly tend to alleviate them; nor ſometimes, in the courſe of God's providence, when ſome ſpecial end of his inflicting them has been anſwer'd, without a viſible reward. It is ſufficient, in order to a full vindication of the divine goodneſs from the charge before us, that we are aſſur'd by a ſpecial promiſe, which yet is highly agreeable to our natural expectations, that *all things, ſhall work together for good*, either here, or hereafter, or both, *to them, that love God.*

Chap. VIII.

That the wiſdom of God is conſpicuous in all the diſpenſations of his providence.

THAT which directs and regulates the meaſures of all other moral perfections, and which may therefore be term'd the preſident virtue, is wiſdom; which appears therefore to have the like office, in relation to the acts of the mind, that the eye has to the motions of the body. But the perfection of the divine wiſdom being infinite, and the knowledge of it, in all the methods of God's deſigning and governing events, too excellent for us to attain unto; we muſt be ſatisfy'd, in order to our having ſome more diſtinct notion of it, with enquiring, what are the proper and moſt eminent acts of wiſdom, in the contrivance or conduct of men; and thence with inferring, how vaſtly ſuperior the divine wiſdom muſt of neceſſity be in all thoſe reſpects.

Now the moſt general maxims, by which wiſe men, or perſons reputed ſo, are obſerv'd to proceed, are theſe following.

I. THAT they propoſe to themſelves ſome good and deſirable end.

II. THAT they employ the moſt proper means in order to effect it.

III. WHEN the moſt proper means, which wiſdom can preſcribe, are fruſtrated, that they make the beſt uſe and advantage, they can, of the diſappointment.

I. THAT they propoſe to themſelves ſome good and worthy end. Were it not for the truth of this maxim, how artful ſoever men might be in employing or improving the proper means of effecting what they deſign; in diſcovering the ſeveral powers of them; in preventing a diſappointment, or turning it upon ſome other purſuit; yet wiſdom could have no manner of uſe, or rather would be highly detrimental to thoſe, who are poſſeſs'd of it; ſince to act without any good or worthy end, is worſe than not to act or deſign any thing at all. It is true (and herein the great defect of human prudence conſiſts) wiſe men are often impos'd upon by falſe appearances of good; and ſometimes, for that reaſon, impatiently deſire thoſe things, that are prejudicial to their true, and moſt important intereſts: Or where the object of their deſires is ſome real good, it frequently happens by one accident or other, in the natural order of things, to be the occaſion of much trouble and diſquiet to them. But the perfection of God's wiſdom excludes, at once, all poſſibility of error in his choice, and of every ill accident, that can be ſuppos'd to happen in conſequence of it. As he makes a perfect eſtimate of the true nature of things, and cannot be miſled by appearances; ſo he knows all their poſſible combinations, and whatever will in the ſequel of his providence reſult from them.

II. WISDOM having propos'd ſome good or worthy end, its next office is to employ the moſt proper means of effecting it. And here again the wiſdom of the wiſeſt of men, is, generally ſpeaking, *but vain*. For when ſeveral methods are propos'd at once, of effecting what they have in view, all of which appear probable; not knowing diſtinctly which of them, for that reaſon, to prefer, or whether it would beſt operate; they many times chuſe that, which, in the progreſs of their endeavours, appears to have been the only thing that could have obſtructed, if not perhaps, in the end, wholly fruſtrated the ſucceſs of them. Even a greater extent of knowledge, is ſometimes obſerv'd to make men commit the greater and more dangerous errors; their views, indeed, are more open and exalted; but they ſtand upon a precipice, from which, as there is more hazard of their fall, ſo the effects of it are commonly more fatal. Do not we often ſee, that men of ſlow underſtandings, and ſervile employments, who, excepting the ſettled rules and natural progreſs of their induſtry, ſeem, in great meaſure, to act by chance; yet often ſucceed better, as to the affairs of this life, than thoſe who have acquir'd a competent ſtock of reputation for their learning or ingenuity; and who would not be thought, by any means, or on any account, to act without a juſt or well concerted deſign? How often does a fine genius envy the fortune of that man, whom he deſpiſes for his ignorance; and what would not the Poet, with all his bright thoughts, ſometimes give to change circumſtances with the dull mechanick?

The errors of men, in miſtaking the proper means of effecting their ends, not only appear from what paſſes every day in the lower ſcenes, and common affairs of life; but on occaſion of the moſt conſiderable and important events, that happen in the world. How many battles, for inſtance, have been loſt (if we conſult hiſtory) under the conduct of the moſt experienc'd and wiſe Generals, by occaſion of ſome accident? Whilſt others have been, on the ſame account, gain'd, againſt all the rules of military prudence. But as God, who is *wiſe in heart*, cannot err in chuſing the moſt proper means; ſo as he is *mighty in ſtrength*, and foreſees all accidents that can poſſibly happen, neither can he be obſtructed in the conduct or execution of his deſigns.

III. Another rule of wiſdom, when the moſt proper means it preſcribes are fruſtrated, is to make the beſt uſe and advantage poſſible of the diſappointment.

I do not lay down this maxim, as if it were poſſible any thing ſhould happen to fruſtrate what God has abſolutely deſign'd; for *who*, or what *can reſiſt his will?* But only to ſhew, that, in conſequence of the free choice of men, to which he has determin'd to leave them, he ſometimes permits thoſe things to be done, which he does not approve. But ſince the order of things requires, that in particular caſes, where men make an ill uſe of their liberty, certain actions ſhould happen contrary to the general will and deſign of God, the higheſt act of wiſdom is to over-rule them, towards the accompliſhing ſome wiſe or good end. Thus the deſigns which were form'd, and for a conſiderable time carry'd on, to all appearance, for the deſtruction of *Joſeph*, open'd at laſt in a beautiful and ſurprizing ſcene of providence towards him; and prov'd the very means of his future glory: And, in particular, of the accompliſhment of that prophecy concerning his ſuperiority over his brethren, which they were firſt undertaken, and intended to prevent.

The ſcheme, which *Haman* had labour'd ſo much for the ruin of *Mordecai*, contributed no leſs evidently to his advancement, and the benefit of that people, whoſe nation and religion it was deſign'd to effect the extirpation of at once.

I might obſerve the like effects of a wiſe providence in the preſervation of *Daniel*; whoſe unjuſt and ſevere uſage ſo viſibly contributed, not only to his own honour, but that of religion in general; by occaſioning a decree for the worſhip of the true God, enforc'd by an acknowledgment, *that no other God could deliver after the ſame ſort.*

THE wiſdom of man, indeed, tho' it may in ſome caſes do much in this kind, yet is not always able to improve ill accidents to his advantage. Both the ignorance and the impotence of men render the aphoriſm, laid down by the author of the book of wiſdom, particularly applicable on this occaſion. *The thoughts of mortal men are miſerable; and our devices are but uncertain* *. Eſpecially when men, who have a reputation for wiſdom, repoſe too great confidence in their own abilities or experience, without having recourſe to God for his direction or aſſiſtance; or when, perhaps, they leave him in the conduct of their affairs, wholly out of the account. For, as the ſame excellent author ſays, in a pious acknowledgment to God, *though a man be never ſo perfect among the children of men; yet if thy wiſdom be not with him, he ſhall be nothing regarded* †. It is therefore, at once, the peculiar prerogative and glory of the all-wiſe God, who perfectly knows the powers and progreſs of natural cauſes, with all events depending on human will, that he is able at all times, and when, in human appearance, there is the leaſt proſpect of ſuch an over-ruling power, to bring *good out of evil,* and *order out of confuſion.*

THERE are, notwithſtanding, ſome objections againſt the wiſdom of providence, which, before I conclude this head, I ſhall conſider the force of, in as narrow a compaſs as I can.

1. IT is queſtion'd, if a wiſe God govern the world, why is there ſo much diſorder and injuſtice permitted? It being the principal buſineſs of all wiſe governors to prevent ſuch evils.

To this we anſwer, that God governs mankind in a way proper to their nature and condition; and to the great ends of his government, in diſtributing rewards and puniſhments to them in another life. But ſhould he continually interpoſe, towards preventing any diſturbance in ſociety, or in order to promote the peace of it; to puniſh men ſo ſoon as they deſerve puniſhment here, or immediately to reward them upon any good action; the motives to faith, and of obedience from the regards of another life, would be too much over-rul'd; and the ſenſible impreſſion of ſuch a procedure,

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* Wiſd. 9. 14.

† Chap. 9. 6.

cedure, would bear too hard upon the freedom of human will. Now where a wiſe agent may be ſuppos'd to have two or more ends in view, we are not to make a judgment concerning the wiſdom of his conduct, from what he does in relation to any accidental or ſubordinate, but to his principal end.

2. It is ſaid farther, that a wiſe agent does nothing ſuperfluous or in vain. And yet the rain is not only obſerv'd to fall where 'tis neceſſary to fœcundate the earth; but on the high ways; on the tiles of houſes; or the leads of churches; where it rather appears incommodious. Whereas it may ſeem rather agreeable to the deſign of providence in ſending rain, that the clouds ſhould be directed to fall only, where the fruits of the earth require; as watering pots in a garden, are only caſt over the beds, where the plants or flowers grow, and not over the walks or ſtatues, where water would be not ſo much uſeleſs as inconvenient. This objection ſuppoſes, that God, in the diſtribution of the rain, ought to interpoſe by a continued ſeries of miracles. But that would more effectually deſtroy the ends of his wiſdom, in governing men as free agents, and whoſe belief in his providence he would have the effect of choice, not of an overbearing evidence of ſenſe; than his permitting natural cauſes to go on in their proper courſe, or according to their own way. If particular reaſons therefore could not be aſſign'd for the fall of the rain in certain places, it is ſufficient to ſay in general, there are reaſons for the ends of providence for the promiſcuous fall of it, ſuperior to thoſe, which are objected from the inconveniences, that attend it.

3. Another argument againſt the wiſdom of providence, is taken from untimely or monſtrous births; which are thought not very reconcileable to the conduct of a being, whoſe peculiar character it is, that, *his way is always perfect*. But we have, in great meaſure, already prepar'd the anſwer to this objection. For ſince God governs the world by the moſt ſimple and general laws; and 'tis not neceſſary he ſhould, on every occaſion, interpoſe to regulate any accidental diſorder, which natural agents may fall into; it is unavoidable, but that irregular or ſtrange productions ſhould happen on one occaſion or other. Conſidering, indeed, the ſimplicity of the laws of providence, it is much more ſurprizing, and tends to give us the higheſt apprehenſions of the divine wiſdom, that they do not happen in a much greater variety of inſtances.

4. But one of the greateſt difficulties in reference to the wiſdom of providence, is pretended to have ſome foundation in certain paſſages of holy writ. It is argued, that if, as we are aſſured in them, God willeth the ſalvation of all men, all men muſt neceſſarily, of conſequence, be ſav'd. For where can be the wiſdom of God, in

willing, what, according to his own eſtabliſh'd order of things in leaving men to their liberty, will never be executed? In anſwer to what is here objected, it is not neceſſary to ſay any thing farther, than that the whole force of it depends on a wrong and controverted ſenſe of the term *willing*. Thoſe who make this objection, intend by it an abſolute will of God to ſave all men, without regard to any terms or conditions previouſly requir'd to their ſalvation. And then indeed it would argue great imperfection in the ſcheme of God's providence, to deſign any thing, that would never take effect. But if we underſtand by the words, that God would have all men to be ſav'd (and ſo the whole tenour of holy ſcripture obliges us to underſtand them) as his will imports a general deſire to this end, on condition of their complying with the means of ſalvation, which he has preſcrib'd, then his will is not fruſtrated, nor conſequently his wiſdom affected, if at laſt they periſh, for want of performing that condition. It would rather argue a defect in the wiſdom of God, if when he had propos'd, and by the moſt earneſt and repeated inſtances, inſiſted upon the performance of ſuch a condition, he ſhould, after all, ſave men without any regard to it.

SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

Book IV.

Of the * Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, as contain'd in the Creed; commonly call'd the Apoſtle's Creed.

Article I.

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

Chap. I.

I believe.

THE latin word, which is render'd, I believe, and from which the whole confeſſion of our faith is here call'd the *Creed*, tho' but twice expreſs'd in it, yet is to be underſtood as prefix'd to every article; and to every part or branch of any article, that may be reſolv'd into more propoſitions than one. It being therefore a word of ſo great and general importance, I ſhall in the firſt place endeavour to diſcover, and in as diſtinct a manner as I can, the full import and meaning of it.

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* In juſtice to my very worthy and learned friend Dr. *Waterland*, maſter of *Magdalen*-College in *Cambridge*; I think it here incumbent on me publickly to acknowledge, that I owe in a manner the whole expoſition of the two firſt articles of the Creed, to the papers he was pleas'd to favour me with. Yet I have taken the liberty allow'd me, to his diſadvantage, I confeſs, of expreſſing my ſelf ordinarily in my own way, and even of inſerting ſome few things, which I apprehended might not be altogether unuſeful. Tho' I have been leſs injurious to him in both theſe reſpects, upon the ſubject of the Trinity; to which he has apply'd his thoughts with ſo great care and accuracy, and to ſo excellent purpoſe.

When I ſay, I believe, I intend the ſame thing, as if I ſhould ſay, I aſſent to this or that propoſition; I receive it for truth; and make it an article of my belief or faith. But becauſe faith and belief may be diſtinctly conſider'd; faith, as a ſpecies of belief; and belief of judgment; that I may more clearly proſecute the ſubject before me, it will be neceſſary that I ſhould carry my enquiries as high as judgment; and ſo gradually reſolve it into its proper kinds. But before I can do this, it may be convenient that I ſhould examine and ſettle the true ſignification of the word; which, in common acceptation, is ambiguous, and ſtands for very different ideas.

We may obſerve, in general, two ſenſes of the word; the one improper; the other proper. The latter of which is what we are now principally concern'd in.

There is one ſenſe of the word judgment, which I call improper; tho' it has obtain'd in the ſchools, and paſs'd current in our ſyſtems of logick and philoſophy, for a conſiderable time. The operations of the underſtanding have been commonly referr'd to three heads; ſimple perception, judgment, and diſcourſe. By the firſt of which is meant the naked view and perception of a thing objected to the mind, without our affirming or denying any thing of it. By the ſecond is underſtood our uniting or ſeparating the ideas of the mind, by affirming or denying one thing of another. By the third, our deducing one thing from another.

But all theſe three diſtinctions are reducible to one general head, and are, in truth, but ſo many perceptions. The firſt is perception, without diſpute, and ſo may be term'd ſimple. The ſecond, call'd judgment, is nothing but the relation of ideas one to another, and ſo is a complex perception. Diſcourſe, the laſt of the three, is nothing elſe but the perception of that relation, which is between two ideas, by the intervention of a third; and ſo is a complex perception, as well as the former; only with this difference, that judgment is a complex immediate perception; diſcourſe a complex mediate perception. The operations therefore of the underſtanding are all reducible to one; namely, to perception, ſimple or complex; and complex is divided into mediate and immediate. The laſt of which has gone under the name of judgment.

But there is another ſenſe of the word judgment, which more peculiarly concerns us, and ought to be carefully explain'd. It is the determination which the mind makes of the truth or falſhood of any thing propounded to it. This differs from perception in many reſpects. For,

1. The mind is paſſive in every perception, as it is in ſenſation, receiving the ideas which offer themſelves as they are, and which cannot poſſibly be receiv'd otherways. But in determining upon the truth or falſhood of any thing, the mind is active. And this very determination, call'd the laſt judgment or dictate of the underſtanding (it ſhould rather be ſaid of the mind) is the principle of action, influencing and informing the whole man, conſider'd as a moral agent.

2. Perception is always true, and neceſſarily what it is; and conſequently infallible. For a man cannot be deceiv'd in what he perceives; any more than he can be in what he ſees, hears, or feels. What he does not truly feel, hear, or ſee, he does not feel, hear, or ſee; and what he does not truly and really perceive, he perceives not at all, but only imagines he perceives. Perception therefore is infallible. Whereas judgment is often uncertain, precarious and fallible. It may be true, or it may be falſe; it may be right, or wrong; as it happens in a thouſand caſes, where the mind has no clear or diſtinct apprehenſion of things.

3. Judgment is often without perception, or goes before it; and therefore certainly is not perception itſelf. This is the caſe in all falſe and erroneous judgments, which men make precipitately; when either they are impatient of examining, or under the power of ſome prejudice or blind paſſion, which hurries them on to make the concluſion, before they have duly conſider'd the premiſes. Even when perception and judgment go together, yet they are manifeſtly diſtinct acts of the mind; and differ from one another, as the cauſe does from the effect. For we reſpectively judge a thing to be, or not to be, for this reaſon; becauſe we perceive it is, or that it is not. The mind fully acquieſces in either determination; becauſe ſhe fully diſcovers the different grounds of it.

4. That perception of the evidence, and judgment of the concluſion, are very different, appears farther from hence; that tho' the evidence be no more than probable, yet the mind often receives the concluſion for true and certain; and with as much aſſurance, as if there were the moſt evident proofs of it. Perception therefore (which is the concluſion I would draw) is one thing, and judgment another.

This being eſtabliſh'd, let us proceed one ſtep farther to enquire, what power of the mind judgment belongs to? Whether to the underſtanding or to the will; as it has been cuſtomary to diſtinguiſh the operations of it. The uſe of this enquiry will appear preſently. It is not the effect of a vain or fruitleſs curioſity; but of ſuch importance, that neither the nature of human liberty, nor the true foundations of morality, can be rightly underſtood without it.

Now, from what hath been already obſerv'd, it appears very plain, that judgment is an act or power of the will. For ſince it certainly belongs to the mind of man, and is not perception, which is all that properly relates to the underſtanding, it muſt be referr'd to that operation of it, which we call will. The underſtanding is paſſive in receiving its ideas or notices of things; the will active in the choice it makes. Therefore ſince judgment has been prov'd to be an act of the mind, and a principle of action; and is generally, indeed, acknowledg'd to be ſo, it muſt neceſſarily belong to that active power of it, which we call the will.

Yet this plain and certain truth has not ſo generally obtain'd, as it ought, and as might reaſonably have been expected. Tho' perhaps the revival of the controverſy concerning human liberty, may have ſome good effect, in order to eſtabliſh ſo neceſſary a principle; it being the beſt, I will venture to ſay, the only key to open all the myſteries of that ſubject, and to let us into the true ſtate of it, which has been commonly thought and complain'd of as ſo impervious to human underſtanding. For the fundamental error, which has render'd the controverſy about it ſo intricate and dark, aroſe wholly from hence; that men have referr'd judgment to the underſtanding, as a diſtinct faculty of the mind; inſtead of referring it, as they ſhould have done, to the will, the true and proper ſource of it.

By this method (if I may be here allow'd to reſume the ſubject of human liberty, in order to ſome farther illuſtration of ſo difficult a point) and by this method only, morality is eſtabliſh'd upon its true baſis. All our miſcarriages and diſorders are owing to the abuſe of our liberty; to thoſe acts of the will, thoſe precipitate erroneous judgments we make before the underſtanding is permitted to apprehend or ſee things in a true light. The foundation of every irregularity we are guilty of, lies in an erroneous ſentence; not of the underſtanding, for that paſſes no ſentence; but in general, if you pleaſe, of the mind; or, if we ſpecify the proper and diſtinct power exerted on this occaſion by it, of the will.

This diſtinction, well conſider'd, will fully obviate all the difficulties relating to human liberty. Which is no inconſiderable advantage ariſing from our poſition, that *judgment is an act of the will.* However, becauſe ſo important a truth cannot be explicated in too clear or particular a manner; I ſhall proceed to enquire into the nature and extent of that freedom, which I aſcribe to the mind, in the judgments made by it. As ſuch an enquiry may farther contribute, for that is the great ſcope of my preſent deſign, to enlighten the ſubject of faith; and to ſhew us, in what reſpects it is a virtue, and in what it is not; and how far men may be look'd upon as maſters of their own faith.

Sect. I.

Of liberty of judgment.

There are two principles, or natural inſtincts, if I may ſo call them, which put a bar to our liberty of judging; and which we muſt therefore always conſider it with a reſerve to. The firſt of theſe obſtacles conſiſts in our attachment to truth, already perceiv'd. The ſecond in our continual and invincible deſire of good.

I. In the firſt place, it muſt be allow'd, that a diſtinct and clear perception extorts and commands our aſſent; the mind is overborn and captivated by the force of it, without any power of reſiſtance. The will immediately yields and ſubmits to it, and is ſo far under a moral neceſſity of coming to a determination in favour of what it perceives.

Yet were there nothing but clear and diſtinct perception to obſtruct or reſtrain our liberty, there would ſtill be ſcope enough for the play and exerciſe of it. For there are things innumerable which fall under our conſideration, that are far from affording us ſo clear and irreſiſtible an evidence, as muſt neceſſarily determine the mind, one way or other, to come to a certain or abſolute deciſion concerning them. And as to thoſe few things, in compariſon, which might afford the mind, when attended to, ſuch an evidence, the will has, in great meaſure, a power of intercepting the light of them, of denying attention to it, or turning away from it. And then as to any effect upon the mind, it will be the ſame thing, as if they had been, in their own nature, much more intricate and obſcure.

They, who have well conſider'd human nature, will believe this to be very poſſible; and will hardly imagine the will to want any liberty in this reſpect; or to be neceſſarily determin'd on the ſide of the cleareſt truths; ſuch, I mean, as, upon a due and ſtrict examination, would appear ſo. They will be apt to ſuſpect, that the byaſs on our minds runs ſtrongly the other way; and that men are rather under a neceſſity of determining, where they have no clear or diſtinct perception; or againſt ſuch truths, as do, or might upon the leaſt attention, afford it. But however, there is certainly no neceſſity of determining except one way, and in one caſe; and that is where the mind perceives clearly and diſtinctly the truths propos'd, and attended to by it. So great is the goodneſs of the creator towards mankind, that tho' he has, in ſome caſes, put us under a neceſſity of determining right; yet he has in no caſe neceſſitated us to determine, nor, conſequently, to chuſe wrong. If we then conſider the principle before mention'd, as laying a reſtraint upon our liberty, it is obſervable we have, notwithſtanding, full liberty to aſſent or diſſent, or to ſuſpend judgment, either when we can have no clear and diſtinct perception, or where we will have none. So that there are yet grounds large enough for our liberty to act and expatiate itſelf in.

II. But there is another principle, which brings our liberty ſtill within a narrower compaſs; a continual and invincible deſire of good, founded in ſelf-love; which ſuffers us not to ſuſpend our judgment, in caſes, where, having no clear or diſtinct perception, we might otherways do ſo; becauſe it is very neceſſary for our eaſe and quiet, that we ſhould come to a determination one way or other. So that, by this principle, the liberty of ſuſpending abſolutely, is confin'd chiefly to ſpeculative points, or matters of no immediate concernment to our intereſts. However, there is liberty ſtill left, if not of ſuſpending, yet of determining as we pleaſe, or as we think moſt proper. And ſince we are apt to conſider, from the ſenſible impreſſion they make on us, the preſent good or evil, to be the greateſt good or evil; it is owing to this miſtake, and the precipitate ſentence it occaſions, that all our ſins, diſorders, and impieties are committed. That men make ſuch raſh and erroneous judgments, is every moment viſible; and it is too plain they form the rules of their conduct by them. Yet they are ſo far from being neceſſitated, after all, to make ſuch judgments, that they often queſtion the truth of them at the ſame time, they are in particular caſes, or under any violent circumſtances of temptations, led into them.

It follows from what has been ſaid, that neither our attachment to truth, clearly perceiv'd, obliges us to perceive, what we either cannot, or will not perceive; nor our inceſſant deſire of good neceſſitate us to believe that to be our true good, which, how deſirable ſoever it may appear, really is not ſo. Men, notwithſtanding, are in general left very much to their own liberty; and ſo far, that their judgments may, in moſt caſes, be call'd their own judgments. From the principles foregoing, I ſhall take occaſion to deduce and lay down theſe five obſervations.

1. That all beings, whoſe circumſtances are ſo happy, as not to incline them at any time to determine one way or other, in matters where they have no clear or diſtinct perception, are under no temptation either to judge, or to act amiſs.

2. All beings, whoſe underſtandings are ſo perfect, as to ſee clearly, on every occaſion, the truth and reality of all things, to which I may add their ſeveral relations, muſt neceſſarily both judge and act right. Yet their determinations, however voluntary, are not, in a proper ſenſe, free.

3. The freedom of ſuch beings can only be underſtood in oppoſition to a phyſical neceſſity; they are under a moral neceſſity both of chuſing and doing well. And ſuch a neceſſity is a perfection, and a happineſs proper to a ſtate of glory.

4. The freedom of man may be underſtood in oppoſition both to moral and phyſical neceſſity. It is reſpectively a perfection or an imperfection, as we compare it with the ſtate of creatures below him, or of beings above him. This kind of freedom is proper chiefly, if not ſolely, to a ſtate of probation.

5. Since it is apparent that our judgments influence our practice, and that we frequently both judge and act wrong; the latter error being the inevitable conſequence of the former; if we be under any moral neceſſity of judging at all; either there is no ſuch thing, properly ſpeaking, as ſin; or this ſuppoſition makes God the author of ſin, as well as of our falſe judgments and deceptions. Which implying a contradiction to the cleareſt ideas we have of the divine nature and perfections, it muſt follow, that our falſe judgments are our own, chargeable upon us as ſuch, and therefore not neceſſary; and ſo not properly belonging to the underſtanding, whoſe perceptions or operations are all neceſſary. They muſt then belong to the will; and are properly ſo many volitions or acts of it. And conſequently, upon the whole matter, willing and judging will be in this ſenſe, philoſophically and ſtrictly ſpeaking, the ſame.

Having thus examin'd, what the general notion of judgment is, and wherein it conſiſts, it may not be improper for me, in purſuance of my deſign, to reduce it under its ſeveral kinds. The firſt and immediate diviſion of it, is into affirmative and negative. Affirmative, when we judge any thing to be; negative, when we judge it not to be. The firſt is call'd aſſent or belief; the ſecond disbelief or denial. Suſpending is properly neither aſſenting nor denying, neither believing nor disbelieving; in a word, it is not judging, but the preventing or deferring judgment, till ſome farther evidence may oblige us to give it. As to the negative branch of the diviſion, I ſhall ſatiſfy my ſelf with having barely mention'd it; the affirmative only being of preſent importance to our enquires, which comes next in order to be conſider'd.

Sect. II.

Of belief or aſſent in general.

I Here take the word belief in its largeſt ſignification, as denoting any kind of aſſent, or degree of it, upon whatever ground or motive it may ariſe: For this alters not the nature of belief in general, but only ſerves to ſpecify its ſeveral kinds. Some would confine the notion of belief to thoſe matters only, whereof we have no infallible or demonſtrative evidence; and ſo oppoſe it to knowledge, ſtrictly ſo call'd. Which is a very improper notion of it, on a double account. Firſt, becauſe one kind of aſſent, if oppos'd to any thing, ſhould be oppos'd to another kind of aſſent. Whereas knowledge is not aſſent, but the cauſe or ground of aſſent. And, ſecondly, becauſe allowing that knowledge ſhould ſignify aſſent, grounded upon infallible evidence; yet why may not the word belief ſignify that too, and ſo knowledge be a ſpecies of it? There is no impropriety in ſaying, we believe the exiſtence of God, tho' we know it by a clear and infallible deduction of reaſon. And, I preſume, that the apoſtles in general, or *Thomas* in particular, who were eye-witneſſes of our Lord's reſurrection, might have been properly ſaid to believe it, however evident to ſenſe. Believing therefore may very well ſignify aſſenting in general.

I ſhall here then conſider the words belief and aſſent, as terms ſynonymous, or equivalent; and my next buſineſs, now that the ſignification of the name is ſettled, is to enquire into the nature, and true notion of the thing.

Belief being a ſpecies of judgment, muſt imply every thing that judgment does in general. As man being a ſpecies of the animal creation, muſt have all the properties requir'd to conſtitute an animal. Belief therefore muſt be an act of the mind, as judgment is; or an habit of the mind, if we conſider that act repeated, and ſo an habitual belief will be a ſpecies of habitual judgment. It muſt be always voluntary, as judgment has been ſhewn to be; tho' not always free. And as it muſt have all that judgment hath in general, ſo it muſt have ſomething ſpecial to diſtinguiſh it from any other kind of judgment. And that is diſcover'd in its being affirmative, to diſtinguiſh it from negative judgment. There is alſo this difference between belief and judgment in general, that belief may be often free, where judgment is not. For we may be oblig'd in certain caſes to judge one way or other, where we are not oblig'd to believe. If the queſtion, for inſtance, were put, whether there ſhall be a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments? This is a queſtion of ſuch concernment to us, and upon the reſolution of which our conduct in this life ſo much depends, that a man who thinks at all, it might be expected, would find himſelf under a kind of moral neceſſity, for his own eaſe or quiet, to determine one way or other about it. But ſince determining either way may be ſufficient to free him from the uneaſineſs of ſuſpence; he will ſtill be left at liberty either to believe or disbelieve. And therefore may thus far be look'd upon as free in reſpect of believing, tho' not of judging. And the like caſe might happen in a thouſand other inſtances.

WHAT has been ſaid of judgment in general, that where the mind has a clear and diſtinct perception, there judgment muſt follow of courſe according to the perception, is ſo far applicable to belief, that where there is a clear perception of the agreement or diſagreement of ideas, there belief or aſſent muſt follow. And tho' there be no ſuch perception, yet aſſent or belief may follow. The mind being free to imagine an agreement, where the underſtanding really perceives none; and ſo to receive the concluſion with as little doubt or ſcruple, as if it had been clearly deduc'd from the premiſes. Which is the caſe of all perſons, particularly of all enthuſiaſts, in the raſh and erroneous judgments they make; and to which, notwithſtanding, they many times tenaciouſly adhere.

HAVING thus ſtated and conſider'd the nature and properties of belief in general; I ſhall proceed to obſerve the grounds and motives upon which it ariſes, and the ſeveral degrees of it. Which, as they ſerve to ſpecify the particular kinds of belief or aſſent, ſo will they help to give us farther light into the preſent ſubject.

SECT.

Sect. III.

Of the grounds and motives of aſſent.

I. THE proper ground of belief or aſſent is evidence; rational evidence: For to believe without reaſon, is the ſame thing as to believe without any ground. And where the evidence is not rational, it is not real, but apparent only. We do but fancy we ſee it, when, in truth, we do not ſee it. It is not therefore evidence, ſtrictly ſo call'd. Whatever it be; it is not the ground, but ſome falſe motive of the aſſent, which follows upon it.

All rational evidence is the medium, by the intervention of which, the mind diſcovers, that the ſubject and predicate of the propoſition it aſſents to, are connected. And the mind proceeds as to this evidence either in the way of reaſoning from the cauſe to the effect, or from the effect to the cauſe, or elſe from the abſurdity of ſuppoſing what is falſe. Thus, in the evidence of ſenſe, our own ſenſation is the medium, and the argument is from effect to cauſe; or elſe from the abſurdity of ſuppoſing that our ſenſes ſhould, under ſuch circumſtances, impoſe upon us. In the evidence of teſtimony, teſtimony itſelf is the medium; and the argument proceeds either from the nature or circumſtances of it, or elſe from ſome abſurdity ariſing upon a ſuppoſition of its not being true. In the evidence of abſtracted reaſon, the medium is an abſtracted idea; and the argument may proceed in either of the ways before mention'd. Evidence therefore may be conveniently diſtinguiſh'd into pure and mix'd. I call that pure evidence, which conſiſts entirely of abſtract ideas, that neither ſuppoſe nor infer the exiſtence of any external object, as in mathematical demonſtrations. Mix'd evidence takes in ſuch facts, with their proper circumſtances, as we have ſeen or heard, or concerning which we have read. This mix'd ſort of evidence may be again divided into evidence of ſenſe, and evidence of teſtimony, divine or human. There is alſo another general and convenient diſtinction of evidence, into intrinſick and extrinſick. Intrinſick is that which ariſes from the nature and properties of the ſubject, its conſiſtency and agreement in the ſeveral parts and circumſtances of it, and their mutual ſubſerviency to the ſame common end and deſign; as we have obſerv'd concerning the internal proofs of the chriſtian revelation. External evidence, is that which ariſes from teſtimony, or ſuch collateral proofs (whether from ſenſe, hiſtory, or tradition) concerning any doctrine or fact, which are proper to eſtabliſh the truth, and induce our belief of them; as may appear from what has been ſaid concerning the external proofs of the chriſtian revelation. The laſt, and one of the moſt important diſtinctions of evidence, which I ſhall obſerve, is that of infallible and fallible. Infallible, where the connexion is clear and certain, as in ſtrict demonſtrations, or immediate inſpiration. Fallible, where the connexion is not ſo immediate, or ſo perfectly viſible. The former of theſe evidences is irreſiſtible, and penetrates the mind with a force, which it is oblig'd to yield and aſſent to. The latter does not ſo neceſſarily captivate the mind; but yet may be ſtrong enough to induce a firm and rational aſſent. Divine teſtimony is infallible evidence; there being a clear and certain agreement of the parts, or terms, in this propoſition; *whatever God reveals is true*. As clear and certain, as that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones. Human evidence is conſider'd in itſelf fallible; yet it may be attended with ſuch ſtrong circumſtances, and in ſo great variety, as to render us equally unreaſonable in making a doubt of it, as in diſputing the plaineſt mathematical or moral truth in the world. Tho' ſuch a teſtimony therefore, barely conſider'd, as human, may be accounted fallible; yet all the parts of it being laid and compar'd together, may have ſufficient force to perſuade our aſſent, as if it had been really infallible. As where, for inſtance, it can be made appear by reaſons drawn from the juſtice or goodneſs of God; or from the nature and faculties of men, that ſuch teſtimony (and ſuch is the teſtimony we have produc'd in proof of the chriſtian religion) ought either to be admitted as true, or cannot, without the greateſt abſurdity, be ſuppos'd falſe. Evidence of ſenſe is in like manner of itſelf, and under a general conſideration, fallible. But all circumſtances and caſes conſider'd, with the ſeveral collateral reaſons and proper conſequences of it, it has, for the moſt part, the force of an infallible evidence. Yet if any one thinks, that evidence of ſenſe, and evidence of teſtimony are improper phraſes; and contends, that all evidence, ſtrictly ſpeaking, is evidence of reaſon; and that the other ought rather to be call'd, the means of information by ſenſe or teſtimony; or ſimply of information by ſenſe; I ſhall not conteſt with him about words, ſo long as we ſtill agree in the thing itſelf, or in the following concluſion; that the ground and foundation of all rational aſſent, is reaſon; or the perception of the agreement between the ſubject and the predicate, by whatever means we come to perceive it: Whether by conſulting ſuch ideas of our mind, as are more abſtracted; or by reflecting on the ſenſations we have felt; or the atteſtations we have receiv'd from others; or by all theſe means together.

Hitherto I have conſider'd only the grounds of aſſent, it may be uſeful, as I deſign'd, to ſubjoin a few remarks, about what I call'd,

II. Motives, as diſtinguiſh'd from the proper grounds or foundations of belief.

These are inducements inclining the will to aſſent, whether with or without evidence: And they are either internal or foreign. Internal are ſuch as ariſe from natural temper or inclination; from our paſſions or habits; from the method of ſtudy; from prejudice; or any quality of mind more peculiar to the perſon affected by them. Foreign inducements of this kind, are ſuch as depend on outward or accidental circumſtances; as to education, authority, example, the motions of the Holy Spirit, or the ſuggeſtions of evil ſpirits. Every thing, in ſhort, is reducible to theſe motives, that moves, or inclines the will to aſſent to ſuch evidence as is offer'd; whether weak, or ſtrong; precarious, or certain; diſtinct, or obſcure. When motives of aſſent ariſe from rational grounds, the mind more eaſily opens to the evidence, and more firmly embraces it. The aſſent becomes, for that reaſon, more agreeable, as well as more ſtrong and permanent. When at other times, upon any ſiniſter motives, we blindly or obſtinately aſſent to what is propos'd, without, or even againſt reaſon, they may be juſtly call'd the motives of an irrational aſſent. And yet, reproachful as they are to human nature, we ſhall diſcover them, in fact, to be too ordinary and frequent, if we do but obſerve, how eaſily we are induc'd to believe what we wiſh or deſire; and to receive for truth whatever the imagination repreſents as agreeable to our paſſions, or convenient with reſpect to our intereſts. If it be objected, that our wiſhes and deſires ariſe from ſome previous judgment: For why ſhould a man wiſh or deſire one thing more than another, but becauſe he judges it preferable? To this I anſwer, that, admitting the falſe or fooliſh deſires of men do ariſe from ſome previous judgment; it may ſtill be true, that thoſe deſires will excite or occaſion other judgments, as erroneous as the firſt; and ſo one abſurdity or folly, as is too common and natural, will draw on a train of like conſequences, if not ſtill more abſurd and fooliſh in the progreſs of them. Yet the leading error, and raſh judgment, upon which all the reſt depend, is from hence; that what appears to be good and deſirable in part, or in one view, we judge to be ſo in the whole, collectively taken, if not ſeparately in every part. But why it may be queſtion'd, after all, do we make ſuch a judgment? It is becauſe we wiſh to have the good without the evil attending it, or which, in the natural order of things, will follow it. In conſequence of which, with all our attention to the good part, as we apprehend it, is taken up; and we reſolve to ſee nothing farther; or if we cannot avoid ſome tranſient and imperfect view of the bad part (which it is ſometimes impoſſible that we ſhould) ſtill it is in our power, either by falſe colours in great meaſure to leſſen the deformity of it, or ſuſpend thoſe enquiries concerning it, which might be neceſſary to ſet it before us in a more clear and open light. It is from this abuſe of our liberty, in neglecting to make all the uſe we might make of our rational faculties, that the origin of all ſin, of all error, and folly, is primarily to be reſolv'd. An abuſe ariſing from theſe two general heads; a ſtrong propenſity to ſome particular good; and our want of attention to the evil, which would more than overballance it; either becauſe we will not ſee it, or chuſe to ſee it under ſome falſe and flattering diſguiſe. Hereby we become chargeable, both for willing what we ſhould not; and for not willing what we ſhould: That is, both for the abuſe of the faculties God has given us, and for our neglecting to employ them. In ſhort, for the abuſe, whether poſitive or negative, of our liberty.

What has been ſaid, will not, I hope, be thought too great a digreſſion from my principal ſubject. I ſhall be the more excuſable, at leaſt, for ſtepping a little out of the way, in order to take in and ſettle ſo material a point, as that of the morality of human actions, and into which only it can be reſolv'd.

Having conſider'd the grounds and motives of aſſent, it may not be improper, in the next place, to ſay ſomething as to the ſeveral degrees of it, ſo far as they are known to us, or we have any terms, whereby to expreſs them.

Sect. IV.

Concerning the degrees of aſſent.

When the mind aſſents firmly and perfectly to any thing propos'd to it, and without the leaſt doubt, or appearance of difficulty; this is the higheſt degree of belief; and may be call'd a rational aſſurance, in oppoſition to that which is falſe or ill grounded: For we often obſerve, that men put on the ſame air of aſſurance, with, or without grounds; according to their different diſpoſitions, or the circumſtances they are under. As a Chriſtian, a Mahometan, or a Pagan, may have equally ſtrong perſuaſions,

ſuaſions, tho' not founded upon equal evidence. We may apply this obſervation to the different ſects among them. A firm and full perſuaſion therefore, upon good grounds, is what, for the ſake of diſtinction, I term'd a rational aſſurance. That which is ill grounded, tho' equally ſtrong, and many times, to appearance, ſtronger, may properly be expreſs'd by confidence or preſumption.

As to rational aſſurance, tho' that may be thought the higheſt degree of it, which is founded on ſtrict and clear demonſtration; yet neither is it always ſo in fact. Neither is there any reaſon why it ſhould be ſo. There may be evidence ſhort of ſtrict demonſtration, or propos'd in a different method, ſufficient to remove all reaſonable grounds of doubt or ſcruple concerning the truth of it. Now ſince the brighteſt and ſtrongeſt evidence of all can do no more, it will follow, there may be a rational aſſurance, and the higheſt degree of it, where, notwithſtanding, the grounds of our aſſent are not the ſame. And that ſuch aſſurance is not therefore conſtantly fortify'd or weaken'd, according to the different nature or kind of the evidence, upon which it is founded.

Having obſerv'd this, concerning the higheſt degree of aſſent, I ſhould next deſcend to the ſubordinate or lower degrees of it. But here we want proper and diſtinct terms. For how indeed ſhould we aſſign them for the information of others, when the difference, as to ſuch degrees, in ſo many caſes, is almoſt imperceptible to our ſelves; and it would be as eaſy for us preciſely and diſtinctly to define any certain degree of pain or pleaſure, of heat or cold, whereof we are ſenſible, as to explain in terms peculiarly adapted to that purpoſe, every different affection or ſentiment of the mind, ariſing from the ſeveral degrees of evidence. When there is any conſiderable abatement, as to that degree of it, which we call aſſurance, we have the word opinion to ſubſtitute in the room of it; and, if we deſcend yet lower, that of conjecture; or ſome other diminutive term to ſignify that our aſſent grows ſtill weaker and weaker, till at laſt it is but one remove on this ſide of ſuſpenſe. And if we ſtill ſuppoſe the mind carry'd on to the leaſt or the moſt inſenſible degree beyond ſuſpence, there begins the firſt degree of diſſent; which may likewiſe be imagin'd to proceed gradually, till it reaches the laſt pitch of diſbelief or infidelity. Thus a full aſſent, and diſſent, are the two extremities, wherein the ſeveral degrees of evidence terminate; and the intermediate degrees of them, may be conſider'd as gradual approaches towards each other, till they both, at laſt, meet, and are loſt in ſuſpence.

THUS I have endeavour'd to explain the nature of belief in general; together with the grounds, motives, and degrees of it. I ſhall now proceed to treat of faith, which I repreſented as a ſpecies of belief; and with an eye to which, I thought proper to lay down theſe previous conſiderations; to the end ſo nice a ſubject might be treated of with greater accuracy; and the eaſe and benefit of the reader, in going along with me, be more effectually conſulted.

SECT. V.

Of faith.

THO' faith is a word of the laſt importance; yet there is ſcarce any word, as 'tis commonly us'd, of more ambiguous or uncertain ſignification. It would be difficult to enumerate the ſeveral ideas, or the ſeveral complications of them, which it has been made to ſtand for. This term alone has occaſion'd many long, intricate, and warm diſputes; wherein not only private perſons, but whole communities have ſometimes intereſted themſelves. Tho', after all, ſuch diſputes have been often little more than verbal; the diſputants, as to the main, agreeing in the thing; and differing chiefly, becauſe they apply'd the name to different or indiſtinct ideas.

SOME have made obſcurity, or want of a clear light, eſſential to faith; grounding their opinion principally on two texts of * St. *Paul*; where faith ſtands for a ſtrong and lively hope; or however for the belief of a future ſtate.

IF this be the true notion of faith, the belief of St. *Thomas* concerning the reſurrection was not true faith: Nor the belief of the firſt chriſtians upon the evidence of ſenſe, concerning ſeveral other articles of the creed.

OTHERS will have a certain degree of aſſurance, to be an eſſential article of faith. According to which notion, a doubtful, weak, or wavering faith, is not faith.

OTHERS, again, think it neceſſary to include the proper effects and fruits of faith, in the notion of it. According to which, a man may firmly believe all the articles of the creed, and yet have no faith.

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* *Heb.* 11. 1. 2 *Cor.* 5. 7.

When we ſpeak, indeed, of juſtifying faith; or that faith, in conſideration of which, God, out of his great goodneſs, is pleas'd to accept or repute us, as juſt; this, we grant, does imply an actual obedience to his laws; at leaſt, an habitual diſpoſition of mind to obey him, in the ſeveral inſtances of our duty, on every proper opportunity of reducing it to act. But faith, in this ſenſe, does not fall directly at preſent under our conſideration. However having incidentally mention'd it, I ſhall here take occaſion to ſay ſomething upon that article of our church, the ſenſe of which has been very much controverted; *Of the juſtification of men* *. It is declar'd in this article, that, *we are accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, by faith.* And, *that we are juſtify'd by faith only.* From which words, ſome have inferr'd it to be the doctrine of our church, that faith juſtifies men before God, excluſive of works, or without any regard to them, as a condition of their being juſtify'd. If this were the true ſenſe of the article, how is it poſſible for any man to diſtinguiſh that faith in the merits of Chriſt which is ſaving, from that which we call purely hiſtorical, and which is common to the moſt wicked and corrupt chriſtians? If it be ſaid, that juſtifying faith conſiſts in a particular application of the merits of Chriſt's death to our particular perſons; but that a faith purely hiſtorical can make no ſuch application; this, we anſwer, is ſpoken precariouſly, and is even contrary, indeeed, to acknowledg'd fact; it being certain, there are great numbers of thoſe, whom our adverſaries, as to this point, will not allow to be in a juſtify'd ſtate, who yet firmly believe the general redemption of mankind by the death of Chriſt; and conſequently their own intereſt in it, in particular. And indeed, if faith alone, without any regard to works, juſtify men, all men, who equally aſſent to the truth of this propoſition, *Chriſt dy'd for all*, muſt of neceſſity have an equal intereſt in the ſalutary effects of his death.

2. That which diſtinguiſhes therefore a ſaving from an hiſtorical faith, cannot lie in a particular application of the merits of Chriſt's death to our particular perſons, which it was deſign'd, upon this principle, ſhould indifferently extend to all men. But the diſtinction between theſe two ſorts of faith will be founded in the different degrees of aſſent. He, for inſtance, who is ſuppos'd to have the ſaving faith, muſt believe that Chriſt dy'd for him upon ſome more convincing and brighter evidence ariſing in his mind, than he who is only ſaid to have an hiſtorical faith. According to this account, juſtifying faith will admit of the degrees of more

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* Art. 11.

or leſs; and he who has a ſtronger perſuaſion of this truth, that Chriſt dy'd for all men, and for him, in particular, will, for that reaſon, be in a better or higher ſtate of juſtification, than he whoſe perſuaſion of the like truth, is leſs ſtrong; tho' it may, notwithſtanding, riſe ſo high, as to be a ſaving faith. I ſhall add, that to found the formal reaſons of juſtifying faith in the ſtronger degrees of conviction or aſſurance, may be the occaſion of betraying men into very dangerous errors and illuſions of mind. As, upon this principle, perſons of a ſanguine or aſſuming temper, may be too apt to ſpeak peace to themſelves without any other reaſon, and *when there is no peace*; ſo others, of a temper naturally more diffident or melancholy, may lie under great diſpondency of mind for want of perceiving in themſelves thoſe lively and ſenſible emotions; which are thought neceſſary to diſtinguiſh the faith which juſtifies, from that which implies only a rational, however firm aſſent, to the doctrine of Chriſt's death; and the univerſal attonement made by it.

3. NEITHER can we, according to the ſenſe of the article, be juſtify'd by faith, in oppoſition to all manner of works; becauſe faith, conſider'd as an act of the mind, is, in that reſpect, a work or proper operation of it. The diſtinction, that faith, the faith which juſtifies, tho' it be an act of the mind; yet does not juſtify as an act of the mind, is ſo nice and curious, that it ſerves only to diſcover the difficulties which the authors of it find themſelves under, in anſwer to what is here objected to them. Neither can it be conceiv'd that the goſpel, which was calculated for the inſtruction of mankind in general, ſhould render the moſt important, and, in the opinion of thoſe againſt whom I am arguing, in a manner, the only neceſſary article of it, above all others, the moſt abſtruſe and unintelligible, whether with reſpect to ordinary, or the moſt improv'd and ſtrong capacities. Now if faith be a work of the mind, the ſtronger perſuaſion any one has, that his faith is ſuch as juſtifies, it will ſtill operate in him after a more ſtrong, lively, and effectual manner.

4. FAITH, according to the letter of the article, is not oppos'd to works in general, or to ſuch works, as, through the grace of God, are the natural and genuine effects of it; but to *our own works or deſervings:* That is, to works done, or pretended to be done, by virtue of any natural power or ſtrength in our ſelves, without God's ſpecial direction or aſſiſtance; and, upon the performance whereof, we may be ſo vain as to arrogate to our ſelves any merit. But it is one thing to ſay, that works, even ſuch as proceed from a due uſe we make of the talents of divine grace committed to us, are not meritorious towards our being

ing juſtify'd; and another thing to ſay, we may be juſtify'd without them. That our juſtification cannot be owing to any works, which it may be in our power, excluſive of the grace of God, to perform; or upon any pretence of merit, by occaſion of them, is very evident from the words of the article. Yet this does not prove, but that ſuch works, as flow from a lively and operative faith, in concurrence with God's grace, may be eſſential to our juſtification by it. Whether faith be not the primary, or more immediate condition of our being juſtify'd, I ſhall not diſpute. It is ſufficient, that without obedience, or an habitual diſpoſition to perform it, no man can be juſtify'd; and that every man therefore is oblig'd, as he would give any evidence to himſelf or others, that he is in a ſalvable ſtate, to *ſhew his faith by his works*.

5. I call faith a condition, becauſe, ſtrictly ſpeaking, neither faith nor works do juſtify; that is, neither of them are a meritorious, but only an inſtituted means of juſtification. *It is God that juſtifies; and*, as the article expreſſly affirms, *only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt*. God, who, of his own free goodneſs, has offer'd a new covenant to us, through the mediation of Chriſt; in whom if we believe, and accept him as Chriſt; that is, in all his mediatorial offices, as a Prophet to inſtruct, a King to govern, and not only under the notion of a Prieſt to attone or intercede for us; we ſhall be at preſent receiv'd to grace and favour, and hereafter judicially acquitted of all guilt, how great or numerous ſoever our ſins have been. For, in a ſtrict ſenſe, we are not juſtify'd till the final ſentence is paſs'd upon us, and has declar'd us to be ſo. As a man, in a damnable ſtate, is ſaid to be condemn'd already; becauſe, ſhould he die in ſuch a ſtate, his damnation would be neceſſarily conſequent to it. So the faithful are ſaid to be juſtify'd, becauſe, as ſuch, they are in a ſtate of favour with God; and, if they live and die in ſuch a ſtate, ſhall be finally juſtify'd. But as a wicked man may, by a lively faith and true repentance, eſcape the the ſentence of damnation, to which he is, in his preſent ſtate, obnoxious: So the faithful, by their future apoſtaſy, may fall from the ſalvable ſtate they are now in, and, by that means, notwithſtanding, finally periſh. What is here ſaid, perfectly agrees with the ſenſe of St. *Paul* concerning juſtification. He every where underſtands it of our being put in a ſtate of reconciliation or favour with God; and not of our being abſolutely or eventually acquitted from all thoſe ſins, whereby we may be afterwards charg'd.

That perſons, in a ſtate of grace, may fall from it, (and there is conſequently a neceſſity of underſtanding juſtification in this ſenſe) is evident from a great number of paſſages in holy ſcripture. That of the prophet *Ezekiel* is ſo full and expreſs to this purpoſe, that I need not recite any other. *When the righteous turneth away from his righteouſneſs, and committeth iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doth, ſhall he live? All his righteouſneſs that he hath done, ſhall not be mention'd: In his treſpaſs, that he hath treſpaſs'd; and in his ſin, that he hath ſinned; in them ſhall he die* [*]. And the reaſon of this proceeding, is aſſign'd particularly in the ſequel of the chapter. *Therefore I will judge you, O houſe of Iſrael, every one according to his ways, ſaith the Lord God* [†]. Whereas if faith were the only cauſe, or rather condition of our being juſtify'd; the final ſentence to be paſs'd upon us, wherein juſtification formally, and in the ſtrict ſenſe conſiſts, would not depend on any judgment God might make *according to our ways*; or, as it is expreſs'd in the New Teſtament, *according to our works*; but upon the enquiry to be made concerning the nature or evidence of our faith. It is not uſual, in reciting the reaſons of any award, to leave out the principal condition upon which it is made: But it is contrary to all uſage to leave out the only eſſential condition of making it, and barely to recite what is accidental to it.

But to ſay ſomething farther concerning this doctrine, ſince I have mention'd it, of the poſſibility, and ſomething more it may be fear'd than a bare poſſibility, of our falling from a ſtate of grace; it is a doctrine, conformable to the ſenſe of the holy ſcriptures, expreſſly aſſerted by our church; which, in another article declares; that, *after we have receiv'd the Holy Ghoſt, we may depart from grace given, and fall into ſin* [‡]: This, conſidering the dependence this doctrine has, and is ſo univerſally confeſs'd to have on that of abſolute predeſtination, may be occaſionally obſerv'd as a farther argument, why the ſeventeenth article ought not to be explain'd in the more rigid, or calviniſtical ſenſe; but in a ſenſe agreeable to the nature of faith and repentance, as antecedently conditional means of our being ſav'd.

Some pious and learned men have, notwithſtanding, ſtrenuouſly maintain'd the oppoſite doctrine, concerning the neceſſity of final perſeverance by the ſaints, and even cited certain texts of ſcripture to ſupport it. But, without entring upon a particular examination of them, I ſhall ſatisfy my ſelf with obſerving in general, that they are far from being either ſo numerous or clear to their purpoſe, as thoſe, on the other ſide, are againſt them; that they import rather God's general will and intention, that men ſhould finally perſevere, than his effecting their final perſeverance by any ſuch over-ruling method of his grace, as 'tis impoſſible for them to reſiſt; and laſtly, that the promiſes, in particular, which God is ſaid to have made to the faithful; that, *they ſhall not depart from him* *; that *he will confirm them unblameable unto the end* †; and *perfect the good work begun in them to the day of the Lord* ‡. That theſe and the like promiſes, I ſay, are not to be underſtood abſolutely, but with ſuch reſtrictions, as may conſiſt with the nature of human liberty, and the means of ſalvation God has preſcrib'd to us, in this probationary ſtate.

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[*] *Ezek.* 18. 24.

[†] ℣. 30.

[‡] Art. 16.

If we judge abſtractedly, or without regard to the authority of ſcripture, concerning the doctrine of final perſeverance, neither of the reaſons, which have been commonly produc'd for it, are of any force.

It is ſaid, in the firſt place, this is a moſt comfortable doctrine, as it eſtabliſhes the faithful in a firm belief concerning the certainty of their ſalvation. But how does it follow, that a doctrine is therefore true, becauſe it is comfortable? If this argument prov'd any thing, it would prove, that the truth of things does not depend on the nature or intrinſick reaſons of them, but on their relative uſe and ſubſerviency to our intereſts.

After all, this doctrine is not ſo comfortable to particular perſons, as in general is pretended. How true ſoever it may really be; yet when a perſon, who believ'd himſelf in a ſtate of grace, falls into any great or heinous ſin, his fears will be apt to ſuggeſt to him, that he has no intereſt in it; that he was deceiv'd in the application he made to himſelf of it, having perhaps miſtaken the illuſions of his own mind, for the ſeal of God's Spirit; and that, inſtead of diſcovering in himſelf any certain evidence of his being in a ſanctify'd ſtate, he diſcovers under his preſent circumſtances more violent ſuſpicions of his being in a reprobate ſtate. Such miſgiving doubts and apprehenſions muſt neceſſarily ariſe in the minds of all men, who have any conſcience, or are not wholly given up to the ſpirit of enthuſiaſm, when their minds reproach them with ſome great or extraordinary guilt; even tho' they have formerly given proper teſtimonies of their being in a ſtate of grace; if, for that very reaſon perhaps, they have not ſtill more deſponding thoughts, as to the ſafety of their condition. It is ſufficient to all the reaſonable grounds of comfort, that God, in the due uſe of our liberty, and the means of grace, will ſave us; and that our deſtruction, if we do finally periſh, can only be of our ſelves. In ſhort, whatever comfort a man may take in believing, that he ſhall continue faithful unto death, or be found ſo at the article of it; yet we are to conſider, on the other hand, how uncomfortable his condition muſt neceſſarily be, in caſe he ſhould find reaſon (as on occaſion of his committing any grievous ſin, he will naturally do) to ſuſpect the grounds of his belief.

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* *Jer.* 32. 40. † 1 *Cor.* 1. 9, 10. ‡ *Phil.* 1. 6.

ANOTHER argument for the final perſeverance of the faithful, is founded on a conſideration of the divine goodneſs. When God has once, through his grace, put men in a ſalvable ſtate, it ſeems to be more irreconcilable with this attribute, that they ſhould be permitted to fall from it, or periſh in view, and, as it were, upon the confines of heaven, than if they had never made ſuch advances towards entring into it. This way of reaſoning would be very juſt, if God, by any poſitive act of his will, or by withdrawing the neceſſary means of grace, ſhould leave thoſe, who had once taſted of the heavenly gift, inevitably to deſtroy themſelves. But as he only leaves them to their own freedom; affording them, at the ſame time, all thoſe aſſiſtances, which may at once enable and incline them to chuſe the better part; if they finally miſcarry, their deſtruction cannot be aſcrib'd to any defect in the divine goodneſs, (for that is, in the very nature of it, arbitrary) but wholly to their own neglect or perverſeneſs. Should the goodneſs of God oblige him to ſave men by a conſtraining grace, without any regard to the good or ill uſe they might make of their liberty, the moſt profligate ſinners would have equal grounds to hope, that they ſhall finally be ſav'd, as good men, that they ſhall finally perſevere. But to return from this digreſſion (which I hope may not be altogether unuſeful) to the ſubject of juſtifying faith, I would obſerve,

6. THAT the notion of juſtification by faith, as including good works, is agreeable to the whole ſcope and deſign of the ſcriptures in general, as well as to many expreſs and particular texts, which may be cited from them. It is ſaid by the apoſtle St. *Paul*, whoſe words have been moſt perverted to favour the contrary doctrine, that *God will render to every man according to his works* [*]; that *no man without holineſs ſhall ſee the Lord* [†]. By St. *John*, that *he who doth righteouſneſs, is righteous* [‡]. By St. *James*, that *faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone*; and, that *a man is juſtify'd by works, and not by faith only* [**]. Now if works are equally neceſſary, and pre-requir'd to the ſalvation of chriſtians with faith; why are they not alſo of equal neceſſity, in order to their juſtification? Since, in ſtrictneſs, and according to the final ſentence to

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[*] *Rom.* 2. 6.

[†] *Heb.* 12. 14.

[‡] 1 *John* 3. 7. *δίκαιός ἐστι, is juſt,* is reputed ſo before God.

[**] *James* 27. 24.

be paſs'd upon man, to be ſav'd, and to be juſtify'd, imports the ſame thing. But, in truth, neither faith, nor works, as we obſerv'd before, are the formal cauſe of our juſtification, but only the conditional means of applying it; and muſt therefore inſeparably concur towards it. As the apoſtle whom I laſt cited argues. *What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man ſay he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith ſave him* [*]*?*

7. THE faith of *Abraham*, ſo much inſiſted on by St. *Paul*, to explain the nature of ſaving faith, did not barely conſiſt in his believing that God would make good what he promis'd to him, contrary to all expectation he could have from the natural courſe and order of things; but in that ready obedience to the command of God, which accompany'd his faith. He was not therefore juſtify'd by faith, abſtractedly conſider'd; but as including his obedience, in the moſt generous and ſevere inſtance of it. So this apoſtle argues, to the ſame effect, in another place. *By faith Abraham, when he was call'd to go out to a place, which he afterwards receiv'd for an inheritance, obey'd; and he went out, not knowing whither he went* [†].

8. IN order therefore to reconcile thoſe paſſages of ſcripture, which attribute our juſtification to faith, excluſive of works, or in oppoſition to them; and thoſe which attribute it to an operative faith, or ſuch a faith *as worketh by love*; we are to obſerve, that when St. *Paul* entirely excludes works as cauſes of our juſtification, he means the works of the law, conſider'd properly as legal works; but with a more ſpecial regard to the rite of circumciſion. Some of the jewiſh converts having aſſerted, that *except a man were circumcis'd after the manner of Moſes, he could not be ſav'd*. He ſhews, on the contrary, that none of the legal ordinances, not that of circumciſion itſelf, are now of any force, either as cauſes, or indeed conditions of our juſtification. He argues particularly in order to obviate that prejudice, that *Abraham* was juſtify'd, *not in circumciſion, but in uncircumciſion* [‡]. He aſſerts to the ſame effect in the epiſtle to the *Galatians*, that *we are juſtify'd by the faith of Chriſt, and not by the works of the law* [**]. To explain the nature of which faith, he afterwards tells them, that *in Jeſus Chriſt neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion, but faith that worketh by love* [††]*:* Which, in the following chapter, he expreſſes by *a new creature* [‡‡]. But this apoſtle no where oppoſes juſtification by faith alone to good works, or the moral law. Theſe paſſages, on the other hand, plainly argue, and more might

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[*] *James* 2. 14.
[†] *Heb.* 11. 8, 10.
[‡] *Rom.* 4. 10.
[**] *Gal.* 2. 16.
[††] Ch. 5. 6.
[‡‡] Ch. 6. 15.

be cited to the ſame purpoſe, that the faith which juſtifies, muſt be accompany'd with good works, or imply an habitual diſpoſition, at leaſt, to practiſe them, whenever we are call'd to do it. If ſome paſſages, in the writings of St. *Paul*, may be interpreted to ſhew, that the works of the moral law are inſufficient to the juſtification of men; we readily grant they are ſo of themſelves, and in the ſenſe this apoſtle intends them. But it will not by any means follow, that becauſe good works are not, ſeparately conſider'd, ſufficient to juſtification, that they are not therefore neceſſary in order to our being juſtify'd upon any account, or in conjunction with faith.

9. THERE is not then ſo great difficulty in reconciling theſe two apoſtles, St. *James* and St. *Paul*, upon this head, as ſome perſons have imagin'd. When St. *Paul* aſſerts, that *man is juſtify'd by faith, without the works of the law*, he argues againſt the *Jews*, who would ſtill have impos'd upon the faithful the yoke of the Moſaick ordinances, in particular that of circumciſion, as neceſſary to their juſtification. In oppoſition to this, he ſhews, that ſuch a faith in Chriſt, as is accompany'd with evangelical obedience, is ſufficient to that end, without any farther obligation of obſerving the legal rites inſtituted by *Moſes*. We may obſerve therefore, that when he ſpeaks of legal works, under the Moſaick inſtitution, he calls them, *the works of the law*, or ſimply *works*; but when he ſpeaks of thoſe moral or evangelical duties, which the goſpel preſcribes and requires, he calls them, *good works*, as being really, in their own nature, good and profitable to men. St. *James* argues, on the other hand, that a dead and unactive faith, which does not produce evangelical works, and, in the ſenſe of St. *Paul* himſelf, *good works*, is inſufficient to juſtification. Both theſe apoſtles ſpeak and deſign the ſame thing; tho' in arguing on different occaſions, and to different perſons; the one to jewiſh converts, the other to hereticks, who thought faith ſufficient without works to juſtification (and probably had perverted ſome difficult paſſages in St. *Paul* to favour that doctrine) they propoſe their arguments in different terms; inſtead of explaining which in a conſiſtent manner, ſome perſons have interpreted St. *James*, as if he wanted rather to be excus'd for not expreſſing himſelf with more caution, than as if he had really ſpoken by the Spirit of God. Which is not to reconcile theſe two apoſtles, as perſons divinely inſpir'd; but to oppoſe St. *Paul* to St. *James*, as a greater, and more conſiderable authority, to a leſs.

10. WHEN 'tis ſaid therefore in the article, that *we are juſtify'd by faith only*; we muſt explain the words in a ſenſe agreeable to that of St. *Paul*; with regard to whoſe doctrine and authority,

the article appears to have been principally form'd. That is, by faith, we are to underſtand the whole complex of chriſtianity, in contradiſtinction more eſpecially to the law, to which it is ſo frequently oppos'd; or we are to underſtand by it the goſpel of Chriſt in general, as the great covenant, which God is enter'd into with mankind; and in conſideration whereof, all other covenants offer'd to them were founded and eſtabliſh'd. That this was St. *Paul's* notion of faith, is farther evident from the caution he gives, leſt men ſhould interpret, as probably he foreſaw ſome would be inclin'd to do, what he had ſaid concerning it, in prejudice of good works, or as if he had ſpoken too ſlightly of them. *Do we then make void the law*, the moral and immutable law, *through faith? God forbid*; *yea, we eſtabliſh the law.*

There is another common diſtinction of faith, into implicit and explicit. By an implicit faith, we aſſent without doubt or examination to every doctrine reveal'd, and to every fact reported in the holy ſcriptures, in conſequence of our believing them, upon good grounds, to be divinely inſpir'd. For otherways, indeed, ſuch an implicit faith would be altogether blind and unreaſonable, as wanting the only evidence and authority which could juſtify or ſupport it. Tho' it is not of equal neceſſity that we ſhould believe every hiſtorical truth recorded in the Bible; ſuch as that of St. *Paul's* leaving his cloak at *Troas*; or *Trophimus* ſick at *Miletum*. Nay, all doctrines are not, conſider'd in themſelves, of equal neceſſity to be believ'd in order to ſalvation; which has occaſion'd the diſtinction; tho' it is extremely difficult to aſſign the preciſe bounds and limits of them, between doctrines fundamental, and not fundamental; or rather, perhaps, it ſhould be ſaid, leſs fundamental. It being matter of abſolute and indiſpenſable obligation, that we ſhould aſſent to every thing reveal'd by God, when it appears to us, that he has reveal'd it; tho' we may with more ſafety be ignorant of certain truths, as not having ſo great or immediate influence towards our ſalvation, than we can be of other truths. I ſhall only take occaſion here to obſerve, that the difficulty which has been urg'd againſt this diſtinction, ſeems much of the ſame nature with that, which unbelievers have pretended againſt miracles. They do not know how far the power of matter may extend, and therefore would conclude, tho' very unphiloſophically, as we have before obſerv'd, that we cannot know to what it does not extend. Thus we are call'd upon by ſceptical perſons, to ſhew, where thoſe doctrines, we call fundamental, end; and where thoſe, which are thought not fundamental, begin. It is not abſolutely neceſſary, that we ſhould come to a preciſe determination as to this point. We think it ſufficient to ſay in general, that all doctrines

ctrines whatever are fundamental, or of indiſpenſable neceſſity to be believ'd, in order to the ſalvation of thoſe, to whom it is evident God has reveal'd them; that the degrees of evidence not being equal as to certain doctrines, they are in proportion more or leſs important, in reſpect of thoſe to whom they are propos'd; that, however, ſome doctrines are ſo clearly reveal'd, and of ſuch direct and ſpecial influence towards our ſalvation, (and ſuch, we conceive, are the doctrines contain'd in the creed) that no chriſtian without an affected, at leaſt, without a vincible ignorance, can be ſuppos'd to deny his aſſent to them. But whether there may not be more fundamental doctrines; whether the number of them ought to be preciſely determin'd; where they terminate, and give place to non-fundamentals, the church has no where declar'd; but leaves the deciſion of this point to private judgment; and the different degrees of evidence, according to which particular perſons may find themſelves differently affected. But it is far from proving, that we are not therefore able to aſſign or ſpecify certain doctrines, which are really fundamental, becauſe it may be very difficult, in particular caſes, to diſtinguiſh them from ſuch as are reputed not fundamental. It might, with as good appearance of reaſon, be argued, that becauſe we do not know exactly how far the power of natural cauſes may go, in reſpect to the ſubject of miracles; and where God begins to interpoſe by a power ſupernatural, we are not capable of determining what a true miracle is, or whether any miracles were ever really done. This illuſtration may ſerve to give us ſome better light, as to the diſtinction I have been conſidering; tho' I am ſenſible it will not hold parallel in every reſpect.

BY an explicit faith, we believe the ſcriptures to be divinely reveal'd, upon ſuch evidence, as is proper to produce a rational and well-grounded aſſent to that principle. This is, what the apoſtle ſuppoſes neceſſary, in requiring, that we ſhould *always be able to give a reaſon of the hope, that is in us*[*]. When we deſcend to the particular doctrines of reveal'd religion, tho' our aſſent ſeverally to them, is imply'd in a general belief, that the ſcriptures are the word of God; yet our faith concerning them, and which we therefore call an explicit faith, is more lively and ſtrong, when having aſſented to them upon the authority of God, we are able to diſcover the particular grounds, or natural reaſons of them. In this reſpect, we are requir'd to *prove all things*[†]; to *examine our ſelves, whether we be in the faith*[‡]; and to *encreaſe in the knowledge of God*[**]; to *the full aſſurance of underſtanding*[††]. To proceed;

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[*] 1 *Pet.* 3. 15. [†] 1 *Theſſ.* 5. 21. [‡] 2 *Cor.* 13. 15. [**] *Coll.* 1. 10. [††] Ch. 2. 2.

OTHERS, if I may not ſay the generality of divines, make it of the eſſence of faith, that it be founded on the teſtimony of God. According to this notion of faith, an aſſent to the truth of the ſcriptures, is not faith; neither to thoſe, who do not believe the ſcriptures, can the belief of a God be properly call'd an article of faith; if, after all, it be, in a ſtrict ſenſe, an article of faith to thoſe that do: Since this principle, that God exiſts, is rather antecedent to all divine revelation, and pre-ſuppos'd to the belief of the ſcriptures, than formally reveal'd in them, as a doctrine which we were or could be ignorant of before. It is certain, however, that, according to this ſenſe of faith, what the apoſtles or others believ'd purely on the credit of their ſenſes, could not be call'd an article of their faith.

I have before incidentally mention'd their notion of faith, as being both groundleſs, and of dangerous conſequence; who make it conſiſt in a firm and ſettled perſuaſion of their being abſolutely, and without any other regard, elected, by an eternal decree of God, (in favour of their particular perſons) to ſalvation.

NOTWITHSTANDING all theſe different ſenſes of the word faith, we may certainly come to ſome fix'd reſolution concerning what it is neceſſary in general for us to believe, in order to our being ſav'd. Tho' perhaps, if the notion of faith were left undetermin'd, diſputants would find leſs matter of cavil and altercation, than they have hitherto perpetually done on this head; which yet might, in great meaſure, be avoided, if every man would diſtinctly define his own terms, and be underſtood according to the true and proper ſenſe of them.

THERE will, however, be ſome difficulty in contriving ſuch a definition of faith, as may be large enough to comprehend all the grounds, and degrees of it; and yet particular enough to diſtinguiſh it from all other kinds of aſſent. For that it is an aſſent of the mind, is ſufficiently evident. But how ſhall we ſpecify it, without excluding ſomething that ſhould be taken into the definition of it. Such a ſpecification cannot be made from the principal ground of aſſent; which, tho' it peculiarly depend on divine teſtimony, yet it depends not on that ſingly, but on all kinds of evidence; whether of ſenſe or reaſon; or of teſtimony, divine and human. Neither can ſuch a ſpecification be made from any particular degree of aſſent: For both a ſtrong and a weak faith, being equally faith, ought to be included in the notion of it. It muſt therefore be ſpecify'd from the object or matter of our belief; and ſhould we ſay, that faith is an aſſent of the mind to ſuch religious truths, upon good evidence, as are of the greateſt conſequence to us; this might ſerve for a general, tho' but an imperfect deſcription of it. For tho' it would take in practical truths, as well as thoſe peculiarly term'd articles of faith; ſtill it would exclude all ſuch hiſtorical or other truths, of leſs concernment to us, as are contain'd in the holy ſcriptures. And yet the ſcriptures at large, and every part of them, when propos'd to us, are the objects of faith. I ſhould chuſe therefore to define faith in general, an aſſent of the mind to all truths, whether ſpeculative, or practical; whether diſcoverable by the reports of ſenſe, or the clear deductions of natural reaſon; whether propos'd to us upon a divine teſtimony, or ſufficient human teſtimony. I would define that faith, in particular, which has the articles of the creed for its object, and in the definition whereof we are now principally concern'd, to be an aſſent to the ſeveral ſpeculative truths expreſs'd, or neceſſarily imply'd in the creed, both upon the evidence of reaſon, and of teſtimony, divine and human. Of reaſon, as to ſuch of them, concerning which we are able clearly to diſcover the natural grounds; of teſtimony, where the nature of them is leſs known, or would have been, without a ſpecial revelation, altogether unknown to us; human teſtimony, mediately; but principally, and in the laſt reſort of faith, divine teſtimony.

Sect. VI.

Of the dependence of faith upon the will.

IT ſufficiently appears, from what has been ſaid, that faith is an act, or habit of the mind. It is always voluntary, and, for the moſt part, free. Voluntary only, when we have a clear and diſtinct perception of the agreement between the parts of any propoſition. Voluntary and free too, where we have no ſuch clear perception. And we may be without it; either where, by reaſon of the intricacy or imperfect view of the ſubject, it cannot be had; or where the mind refuſes or neglects to employ the proper means of coming at it; or, after ſome trial, being weary in its purſuits, is content with making ſuch precipitate judgments, as the inclinations or prejudices, which it is chiefly under the power of, may diſpoſe it to make.

From whence I ſhall, by the way, take occaſion to obſerve, that temporal encouragements, in order to propagate and ſupport the true faith; and either poſitive or negative penalties on thoſe who oppoſe the eſtabliſhment or growth of it; are by no means, in themſelves, improper or unreaſonable; but might be of excellent uſe to ballance thoſe evil propenſions, whereby men are carry'd away to deny the chriſtian faith, in general, or in certain eſſential articles of it, upon any worldly or ſiniſter motives. For where can be the injury of engaging the minds of men to examine things more carefully, in order to enlighten their minds with a clearer diſcovery of truth, or to prevent their making raſh and erroneous judgments? That is, where can be the injury of doing men good, and the greateſt good we are capable of doing them? If there are ſo many motives of vanity, intereſt, or prejudice to byaſs the minds of men towards error, why ſhould it be thought a crime, to add as much weight, if that can be done, on the other ſide, to carry the mind towards truth?

The great objection, which lies, and, we allow it a very conſiderable one, againſt ſuch a proceeding, is, that a power of influencing the minds of other men, can only be exercis'd by thoſe, who are fallible themſelves. From whence ſome would conclude, that there neither is nor ought to be the leaſt power or authority lodg'd with any man, or ſociety of men, to that end; leſt it might, in general, do more harm than good in the world; or that, if there be really any ſuch power, it ought only to be exercis'd in a few particular caſes, where the doctrine is ſo clear and obvious, that all pious and well diſpos'd perſons may eaſily and certainly know, upon examination, that it is of God. But this being a point of ſome difficulty, and falling properly under the head of the rewards and puniſhments propos'd in the Old and New Teſtament, I ſhall reſerve the more particular dicuſſion of it to that place.

Whatever becomes of the queſtion, how far men may be accountable for their faith to men? There is no doubt to be made, but that they are accountable for it to God. As every erroneous judgment is an act of the will, and which a man is no more neceſſitated to make, than he is to commit ſin. Every man having a power, at leaſt, to ſuſpend his judgment, where he has no clear and diſtinct perception, (and that, it is certain, he cannot have of any thing that is not) an erroneous belief muſt, for this reaſon, eſpecially concerning the primary articles of religion, have ſome degree of immorality in it, and generally perhaps more, than we are apt to ſuppoſe; which may render it, what charitable diſpoſitions ſoever we may have in other reſpects towards thoſe who err, or are deceiv'd, yet of dangerous conſequence both to themſelves and others, to aſſert *the innocency of error* in too general and indefinite terms. For it is not ſufficient for a man to ſay, this is my real, or this my ſettled perſuaſion; which frequently amounts to no more, than if he had ſaid, this is my real choice, and moſt agreeable to my inclination; or I was really diſpos'd to believe thus, rather than otherways, or than to keep my mind any longer in ſuſpenſe; but it ought to be conſider'd, what reaſons he had for ſuch a choice, or upon what good evidence he was induc'd to make it; and whether he was, upon the whole matter, oblig'd or neceſſitated to determine either way.

How far any man's faith depends upon his own will, may be underſtood from what has been obſerv'd above with reſpect to judgment in general, which I need not here repeat. The great ſin of infidelity and hereſy, conſider'd ſtrictly under the notion of immoral acts or habits of the mind, may eaſily be deduc'd from the ſame principles. Hereſy therefore, and the ſame reaſon neceſſarily holds with reſpect to infidelity, and I may add ſchiſm, are expreſſly number'd among thoſe * works of the fleſh, which ſuppoſe the greateſt and moſt ſenſible depravation of human will. And the ground of attributing corrupt principles radically to the ſame cauſe, with a corruption of manners, appears from hence; that tho' a man may be under a moral neceſſity of ſubmitting his will to the true faith; yet he never is, nor can be, ſtrictly neceſſitated, or, except in conſequence of his own fault, to oppoſe it; any more than he is to make a falſe judgment. He is therefore as anſwerable before God, and upon as juſt and evident grounds, for the ill uſe of his liberty, which occaſions his oppoſition to the truth; as for that, which betrays him to commit any other vice or immorality whatever.

HAVING thus made ſome general reflections concerning the dependence of faith upon the will; ſuch a dependence, as properly conſtitutes it a virtue, and makes the want or corruption of it, in a ſtrict ſenſe, criminal; I ſhall only add, that tho' we may be under a moral neceſſity of believing ſeveral points of faith, having a clear and diſtinct perception of the truth of them; yet this does not deſtroy the virtue, or, in a ſober ſenſe of the word, the merit of faith: Becauſe, generally, all the previous ſteps towards our attaining ſuch a perception, were ſo many acts of the will, and ſeverally depended on our own free choice. But what is here obſerv'd, will appear ſtill in a better light, when I have laid down the grounds and certainty of faith, which I am now proceeding to do.

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* *Gal.* 5. 17, 18. 1 *Cor.* 3. 3.

SECT.

Sect. VII.

Of the grounds and certainty of faith.

MEN have been apt to run into extremes, upon the head of certainty; ſome into that of exceſs; ſome, upon different motives, into that of defect. There are good and learned men, who, not content with ſufficient certainty, have, out of a pious deſign of doing greater honour to faith, pretended to make it more certain than ſcience. Others, bringing the notion of it as much too low, have ſcarce allow'd it any greater certainty than that of human fallible teſtimony. The plea, which the former make for the certainty of faith above that of ſcience, is, that ſcience depends upon human reaſon, which is fallible; but faith upon the divine veracity, which is infallible, and an unqueſtionable ground of certainty, or elſe nothing can be ſo to men. And yet the argument from the divine veracity muſt be reſolv'd into ſome principle of reaſon, that is, into clear and diſtinct perception; and ſo can have no greater certainty, than the foundation of all certainty, the truth of our faculties. He who would attempt to ſhew, that the certainty of faith is above that of reaſon, has no other way to do it, but by reaſon, or by proving the concluſion from ſome premiſes; but no concluſion can be ſtronger or more evident, than the premiſes from which it is drawn: This pretence therefore, by the inconſiſtency of it, confutes itſelf; and cannot be admitted, but upon one of the moſt abſurd ſuppoſitions in the world, that concluſions may be more certain than premiſes; inferences than principles; in ſhort, reaſon more certain than reaſon.

Is there then no good or reaſonable foundation for what ſo many divines aſſert, that the certainty of faith is greater than that of reaſon? We do not deny that there is a good ſenſe here deſign'd by a very improper expreſſion; and I ſhall take occaſion to open and explain it. The eaſieſt method towards clearing up the whole matter, will be, firſt, to conſider the abſolute certainty of faith, or what it is; and, in the next place, to treat of its comparative certainty, with reſpect to reaſon, improperly ſo call'd: To which I ſhall add, ſomething concerning the certainty of faith upon the firſt preaching of the goſpel, and the faith of ſucceeding chriſtians.

Faith is a rational belief, founded upon all ſorts of evidence, proper to create a firm and entire aſſent. The ſum of the evidence, taken all together, is made up of intrinſick and extrinſick, of fallible and infallible evidence; of the teſtimony of ſenſe, of reaſon and revelation; all more or leſs contributing to ſupport, to ſtrengthen, and illuſtrate each other. Even if we conſider ſuch articles of faith, as may peculiarly be ſaid to reſt upon the authority of God revealing them; yet the truth that God did reveal them, reſts upon the truth of miracles, and the truth of miracles upon the evidence of ſenſe, and that again upon the evidence of reaſon in general; and in particular upon ſuch arguments, as are reſolvable by reaſon, into the truth and veracity of God; which terminate in the proofs of his exiſtence; as thoſe proofs terminate again in the principles of ſcience, and the truth of our rational faculties, the laſt reſort. As to the queſtion of fact, whether any miracles have been wrought in confirmation of the chriſtian religion, it muſt be reſolv'd at this diſtance by ſcripture, and collateral arguments from hiſtory. And the proof of ſcripture muſt be made out by human teſtimony; as that again from ſeveral reaſons drawn from the nature of things; with reſpect to the force and ſtrength of ſuch moral evidence, and the innumerable abſurdities, which would follow, in caſe ſuch evidence ſhould not be admitted. All which arguments again muſt be confirm'd by reaſon, founded on the nature and attributes of God; who has laid men, in ſo great variety of inſtances, and in caſes of the laſt conſequence to them, under an inevitable neceſſity of ſubmitting to ſuch evidence, or of having no evidence.

Faith therefore, all things conſider'd, and upon the whole matter, ſtands upon infallible certainty. And we cannot be deceiv'd in our belief, that the chriſtian religion is the true religion; or that the holy ſcriptures are of divine authority. As to the particular doctrines, we may be as certain of the ſenſe and meaning of them, as we can be of the ſenſe and meaning of thoſe texts of ſcripture, upon which they are founded; that is, as we can be of the true power and proper ſignification of words; which ſometimes muſt be allow'd to admit of infallible certainty, or elſe men could never be ſure that they underſtand one another; tho' words may often be apply'd to ſignify what is very foreign to the original deſign of them. And here the laſt appeal muſt be to our rational faculties; and, except we are not at liberty, by reaſon of the importance of the ſubject, to ſuſpend our aſſent; the ſtrongeſt reaſon, upon a clear and full view of the caſe, ought to perſuade and determine it. What has been ſaid concerning the abſolute certainty of faith may be ſufficient. Let us, in the next place, conſider its comparative certainty.

Sect. VIII.

Certainty of faith and reaſon compar'd.

Custom has in a manner authoriz'd the abuſe of the word reaſon; but if we would inſtruct mankind in general, we muſt be content to follow the vulgar way of expreſſion; only it will be neceſſary that we ſhould diſtinguiſh a little upon the meaning of the word, in order to avoid too great confuſion of ideas in the uſe of it.

Reason is ſometimes taken in a very reſtrain'd ſenſe, as ſignifying properly one particular way of reaſoning from intrinſick evidence, tho' without clear and diſtinct ideas, or any certain connection. The heathen philoſophers pretended, for inſtance, to reaſon againſt the reſurrection of the body, the poſſibility whereof was, notwithſtanding, confirm'd by a known fact, the reſurrection of Chriſt, from their own inveterate prejudices, and very imperfect ideas. Thoſe who oppugn the doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation, argue in like manner, or rather pretend to argue, from the intrinſick nature of things, whereof they know little, and have only, at the beſt, very imperfect and indiſtinct ideas.

Yet this way of arguing often goes under the name of human reaſon, and may well be term'd fallible, as being no more than human conjecture, about things beyond our reaſon, and which our capacities are too narrow to take in the whole extent of. And, indeed, the very nature of things, from which theſe men would yet be thought, in other caſes, to argue, ſuppoſes them ſo. It muſt therefore be allow'd, that the certainty of faith is much greater, and the evidence of it much ſtronger, than the evidence ſuch mighty pretenders to reaſon are able to produce for the certainty of reaſon in their way. It is much ſafer and better to reaſon upon extrinſick evidence, where we have ſomething certain, and can demonſtrate what is ſcripture, and what perhaps the true ſenſe of it, than in queſt of intrinſick evidence, where really there is none to be found; where the ſubject is too obſcure or incomprehenſible in itſelf to furniſh any; or where, in a word, we neither have, nor can have any adequate conception of it. By this rule, we do not prefer faith to reaſon, as oppoſite to it; but only chuſe a certain way of reaſoning before an uncertain; demonſtration before conjecture; and truth before the weak or falſe appearances of it.

Since we have then certain principles to go upon in one caſe, which are wanting in the other, it is evident where the certainty, I need not ſay, the greater certainty, lies; while faith proceeds properly in concert with human reaſon, or is reſolv'd into it: And whilſt, in the other caſe, we only argue from human conjecture, and, many times, in oppoſition to reaſon. I ſhall diſmiſs this point, after having made the following remarks, which may not be improper towards ſome farther illuſtration of it. That,

1. The Socinians, the Deiſts, and under which abuſive diſtinction all denominations of thoughtleſs and unreaſonable men have been of late comprehended, that of the free-thinkers; theſe men, I ſay, merely declaim, when they ſo much pretend to magnify and extol the uſe of reaſon. Their principal and fundamental error is, that whatever attachment they profeſs to reaſon, yet they really prefer conjecture to rational aſſent; and, inſtead of following the light, as they ought to do, upon their own principles, and which they would have thought proper to them, they are hurry'd on by their paſſions, their prejudices, or their vanity, to go before it.

2. The advocates for faith, on the other hand, in oppoſition to reaſon, are often caught by the ſound of words, when, in the heat of diſpute againſt their adverſaries, they run into a ſort of common place (for that has been too uſuall even with learned men) of decrying reaſon, and bringing it into contempt. As if there could be any hopes of our being able to convince men of the reaſonableneſs of believing without or againſt reaſon; or we could expect to prevail by our particular way of reaſoning, after we had ſeriouſly endeavour'd to expoſe the weakneſs and uncertainty of reaſon in general. Our reaſon, however limited in extent, or ſhort in its notices, yet is true and juſt, and may therefore be depended upon, ſo far as it extends, or within its own province; or elſe both faith and reaſon would be mere empty names. It is in vain to diſpute againſt the uſe of reaſon, ſince every diſpute neceſſarily ſuppoſes it; and it is equally eſtabliſh'd, whether by arguments for or againſt it. There is no juſt complaint, in ſhort, to be made againſt the uſe of reaſon, but againſt the abuſe of our liberty, in making falſe and precipitate judgments, without waiting for the orders of it.

3. From what has been obſerv'd, we are better able to judge, in what ſenſe reaſon and faith may be ſaid to be oppoſite; reaſon I mean according to the more popular and abuſive acceptation of the word, whereof I have been ſpeaking. For to ſay, that a rational aſſent, and ſuch is faith, may be oppoſite to reaſon, properly ſo call'd, is a contradiction in terms. But human conjectures,

ctures, and precipitate judgments, are often inconſiſtent, not only with the principles of true faith, but of reaſon too; and it is owing to mere accident, if they be not, in both reſpects, always ſo. That imaginary or pretended reaſon of vain men, who *would be thought wiſe*, and capable of penetrating farther, than men of vulgar or common capacities, into the nature of things, concerning which, they diſtinctly know little or nothing; yet pronounce with a bold definitive air, and ſo without underſtanding what they ſay, or whereof they affirm; reaſon, we aver, in that falſe and counterfeit ſenſe, is the wiſdom which the ſcripture condemns as vanity and folly; and to which that ſolemn rebuke by the prophet, in the name of God, is particularly applicable. *My thoughts are not your thoughts; neither are your ways my ways, ſaith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth; ſo are my ways higher than your ways; and my thoughts than your thoughts* *.

Reason, we allow, is too good a word to ſtand for raſhneſs, pride, or preſumption: And it were to be wiſh'd, among other abuſes of ſpeech, that of applying words to ſignify directly contrary to their true and proper meaning, might be rectify'd. An abuſe, which not only lays a great obſtacle in the way of private perſons, who profeſs to ſearch after truth, but by confounding the ordinary dialect of men, is very often prejudicial to the publick peace and tranquillity. But till we can hope to ſee things call'd by their right names, or are able to prevent the abuſe or miſapplication of words, we muſt ſatisfy our ſelves, as well as we can, with endeavouring, where there is occaſion for it, to ſtate and explain both their proper and improper ſignification.

4. From what has been ſaid, we ſhall be likewiſe better enabled to anſwer a popular queſtion, or, as ſome may perhaps think it, a problem; namely, what are the proper boundaries of faith and reaſon? If by reaſon be meant ſuch diſcoveries, as mere unaſſiſted reaſon might make without revelation, we cannot preciſely determine the extent of it: And, what would it avail if we could? It is ſufficient that we know many things by revelation, which we had otherways been wholly ignorant of. And ſome things that we might perhaps have diſcover'd by the light of nature only, are reveal'd to us in the holy ſcriptures after a more clear, diſtinct, and perfect manner. If by reaſon be meant reaſon in general, or our rational faculties, then 'tis impertinent to ſeek for the boundaries between faith and reaſon; which have ſtrictly no boundaries diſtinct from each other: For faith being a rational aſſent, wherever reaſon ends, faith muſt of neceſſity end with it.

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* *Iſaiah* 55. 8, 9.

Some things, indeed, according to the vulgar way of ſpeaking, are ſaid to be above reaſon, or beyond reaſon. Whereby is intimated, that we may be capable of believing farther than we underſtand. This may be true in a qualify'd ſenſe; but, in ſtrictneſs of ſpeech, our ideas do really extend, as far as our faith extends. As there can be no faith without aſſent; nor any aſſent, but to ſome intelligible propoſition; nor any intelligible propoſition, without intelligible terms, that have proper ideas to anſwer them; it is evident, that our ideas are of the ſame extent with our faith, and that we underſtand as much, and no more or leſs, than we believe.

That I may not be ſuſpected of having a deſign to advance any new or heterodox notion, whilſt I am only endeavouring to free the common way of expreſſion from ambiguity, which tends to breed confuſion of ideas in the mind upon this head; I ſhall deſcend to illuſtrate the ſtate of the caſe, by two or three pertinent inſtances.

We underſtand that there is a God, and that certain attributes eſſentially and incommunicably belong to him. But as to his particular eſſence or ſubſtance, wherein it formally conſiſts, or diſtinguiſhes him from all other beings, we believe nothing, becauſe we are able to determine nothing. We underſtand in general, what the reſurrection of a body means; and what it is for a body to continue for ever in a ſtate of order, tranquillity, and perfection. As to the manner how it ſubſiſts, or acts in ſuch a ſtate, we can believe nothing, neither is it requir'd that we ſhould, more or farther than we underſtand. We believe the thing, becauſe it is reveal'd, and in terms, the meaning whereof is clear and intelligible. But the manner of it can only be ſo far an object of our faith, as it is of our perception; neither can a wiſe God require us to believe, what we perceive nothing of. As to the doctrine of the ever-bleſſed Trinity, we underſtand what we mean by one, and what by three; the meaning of the terms co-eternal, co-equal, or co-eſſential is alſo known to us; but how, or after what manner a Trinity of Perſons, or, if that be not admitted, of any diſtinct qualities, powers, or operations; or, in other words, of three, under whatever diſtinction we conceive them, ſhould conſiſt with the perfect unity of the divine eſſence, is what we can neither believe, nor be requir'd to believe any farther, than we know. We believe, as far as we have ideas; and where we have no ideas, can have no belief. Where our reaſon falls ſhort, or leaves us in the dark, our faith does ſo too.

Men therefore declaim againſt the belief of myſteries, after a moſt impertinent manner, when they run out into a common place, about the impoſſibility of believing without ideas. We have ideas, ſo far as we believe, or may have them, ſo far as we can be oblig'd to believe; and diſtinct ideas too. But it is unreaſonable to disbelieve, what we underſtand concerning any ſubject, becauſe we underſtand no more of it; or to deny our aſſent to the truth of a thing, or the reality of its exiſtence, only becauſe the manner of its exiſting is unknown to us. If this were a good ground for denying our aſſent, we ought not to believe that we ſee any thing, till we can accurately and fully explain the whole myſtery of viſion; or that there is indeed any ſenſible object, till we can ſhew how our inward ideas, which have no figure or dimenſion, ſhould repreſent ſtatues or circles, fields or meadows. If we muſt not believe any thing, till we are perfectly able to account for it, and in all its relations, there will be nothing left for us to believe. We muſt deny, in particular, that we think, becauſe we know not how we do ſo, or by what ſecret ſprings our thoughts are excited, and put in motion. But where can be the reaſon of rejecting what is clear, becauſe there are ſome things obſcure; or of denying that we know any thing, becauſe we do not know all things. If thoſe who reject myſteries, would be thought men of reaſon, let them firſt make good their title, by ſhewing, that they form their judgments upon the true rules or maxims of reaſon; and that they are able to maintain the reaſonableneſs of their principles by any clear connexion.

These reflections may be ſufficient to ſhew, how fruitleſs and vain an attempt it would be to determine the preciſe boundaries between faith and reaſon; or to deſcribe, as ſome may affect to call them, their diſtinct provinces. Revelation gives us new notices of things; it extends and enlarges our proſpect; but leaves us the ſame faculties, which we had before. So that our reaſon has ſtill the ſame uſe, only a wider compaſs to employ and exert itſelf in. As in all other things propos'd to our belief, ſo concerning any articles of religion, we are to conſult the light of our own minds, and examine by our rational faculties, how far they are to be admitted, and with what reſtrictions; what weight they ſhould have with us; and what may be juſtly inferr'd from them? What may be look'd upon as certain truth; and what as being founded only in probability or conjecture? Nothing muſt be admitted, where the ſtrength of the evidence lies another away; nor any thing rejected, where the reaſons why we ought to receive it, appear evidently ſtronger. The moſt comprehenſive and general rule, is, that the beſt reaſons, if it be neceſſary to judge at all, ſhould always preponderate; and conſequently, the trueſt faith is that, which, upon the whole, is moſt rational. The Bible, by this rule, will be found the beſt ſyſtem of philoſophy; and a true reaſoner from the proper lights and aſſiſtances of it, will differ very little from a true believer.

The comparative certainty of faith being thus ſettled upon a true and diſtinct foundation; it ſhall be my next enquiry, as I propos'd, whether, or how far any material difference may be ſuppos'd, in point of certainty, between the faith of the firſt chriſtians, and that of ſucceeding chriſtians.

Sect. IX.

Primitive faith compar'd with traditional.

SOME have been of opinion, that faith, according to the gradual advances of time, muſt grow more weak and precarious. An opinion, which has not the leaſt grounds, either in the reaſon of things, in fact; or hiſtory. We do not find, that there is now any more occaſion to doubt, whether there were two ſuch perſons as *Julius Cæſar* or *Cicero,* than there was a thouſand years ago; or that our old hiſtories ought, for that reaſon, to have leſs credit, than thoſe of a later or modern date. Traditional truths, well atteſted, are to be as firmly believ'd in one age as in another; and ſhould not be thought leſs credible for being often told or reported; it ſhould rather be an argument, the greater diſtance of time there is from their firſt diſcovery, and the more they have been conſider'd and examin'd, that the original evidence of them was ſo much the ſtronger,

But this is not the point, which I would ſpeak to at preſent. The queſtion is, whether thoſe, who ſaw the miracles of Chriſt, or of his apoſtles, and converſ'd with them, had any greater certainty to build their faith upon, than thoſe, to whom thoſe miracles were reported by the teſtimony of others? And the reſolution of this will turn upon another enquiry, whether the evidence of ſenſe be not more certain, I do not ſay, more affecting, than that of human teſtimony, or hiſtory, what confirmation ſoever may have been given to the truth of it?

It has been already obſerv'd, that the evidence of faith, as it now ſtands, tho' founded upon human teſtimony, is nevertheleſs really infallible: So many, and ſo ſtrong circumſtances all conſpiring to ratify and ſtrengthen it; and a contradiction to reaſon, obſervation, hiſtory, and common ſenſe, as well as to the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, being imply'd in the denial of it; theſe conſiderations, I ſay, exclude all doubt, as to the certainty of faith, and even extort aſſent from thoſe, who ſtrictly and impartially attend to them. Such an evidence therefore cannot be conceiv'd, upon any reaſonable grounds, to have leſs force to perſuade than the evidence of ſenſe. Neither can there be more or ſtronger arguments offer'd to prove the truth of our ſenſes, than there are to prove the truth of thoſe teſtimonies, upon which our belief was originally grounded, or is ſtill ſupported. The certainty for thoſe reaſons muſt be allow'd equal in both reſpects; tho' it is not pretended that the latter is ſo apt to affect the mind, or, in general, to make ſo ſtrong, lively, or deep an impreſſion upon it. So far as reaſon goes, both theſe kinds of evidence are upon an equal foot. But cool and ſedate reaſoning is not ordinarily ſo moving, as what comes before the ſenſes, or is reported by them. Eſpecially if it have any proper and direct tendency to gratify the imagination or paſſions; or is better adapted to preſerve the mind in a ſupine or indolent ſtate; which is ſo commonly averſe to labour, but never ſooner weary or diſcourag'd, than when the truths propos'd to it are made up of many parts, and require a cloſe and continued attention. But what comes into the mind by the way of the ſenſes has a more eaſy and free admiſſion, or rather it naturally makes its own way, by awakening the man, who would ſleep over reaſons; and engages the attention of thoſe, who, in regard to points, as we call them, of mere ſpeculation, would ſtand wholly unmov'd, as having neither ſtrength or liberty of mind for ſuch dry and taſteleſs enquiries. We have here aſſign'd the cauſe, why the ſtill voice of reaſon is ſo little or ſeldom attended to by the generality of mankind. Some cannot be prevail'd upon ſo much as to give ear to it. Others, whoſe attention is in ſome meaſure at firſt awaken'd by it, ſoon grow weary of ſo jejune, and, as they apprehend it, dull an entertainment; or are diverted from it by the more ſtrong, vigorous, and agreeable action of ſenſible objects upon them. In order therefore both to excite and keep up the attention, teſtimony of ſenſe is of much greater force than cool or naked reaſon. It carries all the weight in it that reaſon itſelf does, and has, in the foregoing reſpects, a more powerful and extenſive influence. This kind of evidence, in a manner commands our aſſent; while the other rather appears to ſollicit, and, at the moſt, to perſuade it. They may be equally forcible, if equally admitted or entertain'd. But the difference is, one muſt find its way, while the other makes it; and when the way is open to both, the manner of receiving them permits us not long to doubt, which of them we are more inclin'd to prefer. Tho' chriſtians therefore, in the infancy of the church, had not more certain proofs than we have of the truth of chriſtianity, or the principal articles of the chriſtian faith; yet the proofs they had were near, more ſenſible, and awakening, and for theſe reaſons in general, more irreſiſtible. As the firſt converts to chriſtianity had greater difficulties and ſtronger prejudices to maſter, than thoſe who were afterwards born within the boſom of the church, and educated under her care; ſo it was agreeable to the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, that their attention to the proofs of the chriſtian religion, ſhould be excited after a more powerful and affecting manner. To conclude this ſection, tho' we want no rational evidence at preſent either of the truth in general, or of the particular fundamental principles of chriſtianity; yet it muſt be acknowledg'd, that mere rational proofs propos'd to the mind, without any thing to move or ſtrike upon the ſenſes, operates but very ſlowly upon creatures, which have ſo little force of mind, as men, eſpecially the generality of men, are endow'd with. I ſhall only obſerve farther, that what has been here ſaid, ſeems highly agreeable to the deſign of our Saviour in the following words; *Bleſſed are they that that have not ſeen, and yet have believ'd.* It ſeems reaſonable to conclude from the preference which appears here to be given to ſucceeding chriſtians, in reſpect to the greater merit of faith, that to believe without the evidence of ſenſe, requires greater ſtrength, liberty, and a more ingenuous diſpoſition of mind, than to believe upon the evidence of ſenſe. I ſhall take occaſion from hence to conclude this chapter with an enquiry, how far we may be under a neceſſity or moral obligation to believe any truths clearly propos'd, or reveal'd to us.

Sect. X.

How far faith is a neceſſary or moral virtue.

As ſome attribute too much to faith, in oppoſition to works; concerning which they ſpeak upon the compariſon very ſlightly, and ſometimes as if it were really dangerous for a man to think the practice of moral virtue of any conſequence towards his ſalvation; ſo others are no leſs apt to cry up morals in oppoſition to faith, as if it were an act or habit of the mind, that had no manner of relation to them. The former error reſolves all obedience into a ſtrong faith; the latter all orthodoxy into a good life. Between them both, obedience and faith are made things almoſt indifferent. Both extremes ariſe from the ſame principle, the love of liberty, or rather a falſe and criminal deſire of independency. The former are more impatient of reſtraint in point of practice; the other as to matters of opinion. Thoſe are more under the power of the paſſions, which renders them enemies to ſober living; theſe of the imagination, which makes them equally averſe to ſober thinking. They are the latter, whom I am now more immediately concern'd to ſpeak to. It has been aſſerted in other words above, that men are accountable for their erroneous judgments, as well as for an immoral conduct. Indeed, ſtrictly ſpeaking, we are only accountable for making ſuch judgments, as our liberty properly conſiſts in the power we have to make them. An immoral conduct is but the neceſſary effect and conſequence of our judging wrong. And therefore we are as much oblig'd to think regularly, and according to a certain order, as we are to live ſo; or rather the latter obligation neceſſarily ariſes out of the former. So that all morality is reſolvable, at laſt, into the power we have of regulating our own thoughts and judgments.

THE queſtion therefore about the neceſſity of an orthodox faith, will not turn upon this, whether we may be accountable for the falſe and erroneous judgments made by us; it being evident, that we are under no neceſſity of making ſuch judgments; which is the ſame thing with making a bad choice? But the queſtion is, whether ſpeculative points in religion, which do not directly influence our practice, may not be of themſelves ſo obſcure, or of ſo little conſideration, that a man is more excuſable, at leaſt, for proceeding to judge, without a ſtrict examination of them; or without that attention, which was requiſite to prepare him for making a true judgment. To which we ſay, that tho' men ought never to paſs judgment without evidence; yet they are indeed leſs culpable for being miſtaken. Wherever then the ſubject matter of their miſtake is of little or no conſequence, or there is not evidence ſufficient to ground a firm and rational aſſent upon, after a due, ſerious, and impartial examination; nay if a man happens, in certain caſes, where he apprehends himſelf more particularly oblig'd to judge one way or other, to miſtake or determine wrong, tho' concerning a point of greater moment; yet provided he keeps his thoughts and opinion to himſelf, and does not endeavour to ſpread or propagate his error; it is certainly more excuſable in him, than an immoral conduct would be; becauſe his private judgment hurts no body, nor gives any viſible occaſion of ſcandal or offence; and it is alſo much eaſier to miſtake in points of ſpeculation, than concerning the rules of practice.

BUT if the queſtion ſhould be put, whether it be not, upon a general conſideration, a greater crime to propagate hereſy, or corrupt the true faith of Chriſt, to ſay nothing of infidelity, than to lead an irregular, or vicious life? We muſt affirm that it is; as being a crime, at once, of a more dangerous, and a more diffuſive influence. It muſt be allow'd, that he who poyſons the fountains of natural religion and morality, if we may judge of his crime by the direct, and malignant effects of it, is much more criminal, than a mere immoral man: Becauſe his principles tend, if they be not ſo deſign'd, to introduce an univerſal corruption of manners, and to deſtroy the very grounds and reaſons of moral virtue in every kind. Hereſies, in like manner, which tend to overthrow the doctrines of reveal'd religion, and eſpecially if they be induſtriouſly propagated to that end, import more flagrant guilt, than a neglect of conforming our ſelves, in other reſpects, to the rules of that religion. An hereſiarch, in a word, when oppos'd to a bad chriſtian, is as a *Julian* or a *Celſus*, upon the compariſon, with a mere practical pagan.

THEY are impos'd upon therefore by a great fallacy, in their way of reaſoning, who pretend, that men are not, in ſo high a meaſure, accountable for heretical notions, which yet they openly advance, as for a bad life; or that a man may more ſafely corrupt the faith of Chriſt, than be corrupt in his morals. For they do not ſtate the caſe right, nor make a juſt compariſon. Should any one lay down principles to juſtify impurity, or exceſs in eating or drinking, and ſo be a heretick (if the manner of expreſſion may be allow'd) in morality; ſuch a one might we grant render himſelf more obnoxious and deteſtable, than a heretick, with reſpect to points properly theological. But, as the compariſon is made, between an heretick, and a bad immoral man; the queſtion comes to this, whether it be not more dangerous, or do not argue, in the attempt, a greater depravation of mind, to corrupt the faith of the whole church, than to lay an occaſion before certain particular perſons of ſcandal, or perhaps of a guilty compliance, by a ſinful example.

IT is not then without reaſon, that ſome perſons are acted with a ſtronger zeal againſt hereticks in opinion, than againſt libertines in practice; the preſervation of the whole being of greater conſequence, and more to be conſulted, than the preſervation of a ſmall, or, in any degree, of a leſs part. While principles remain firm and unſhaken, tho' men may act contrary to them, there is ſomething ſtill left to reduce them, and to prevent the defection of others. But when foundations are caſt down, nothing but confuſion, and every evil work, can be expected to follow. I ſhall, upon all theſe accounts, take occaſion to infer the neceſſity of a becoming zeal for preſerving the purity of the faith, againſt all innovations whatever, as a neceſſary and indiſpenſable duty. A duty, indeed, expreſſly enjoin'd in the holy ſcriptures, which require, and with which ſanction I ſhall therefore enforce this inference, that *we ſhould earneſtly contend for the faith, which was once deliver'd to the ſaints; and hold faſt the profeſſion of it without wavering.*

Having thus previouſly obſerv'd what I thought might be proper, and of ſome good uſe, upon the ſubject of faith in general; I proceed, and, I hope, to the greater advantage and edification of my reader, to treat of the articles of the creed in particular.

Chap. II.

I believe in God the Father.

Having, in the firſt book, prov'd the exiſtence and unity of God, in oppoſition both to Atheiſts and Polytheiſts, that is, to all ſuch as either do not believe a God, or that believe there are more Gods than one. I ſhall not here farther employ any arguments directly againſt them; but addreſs what I have to ſay with a peculiar regard to Chriſtians; by conſidering what they are to believe concerning God, under the notion of a Father; and as one God, with reſpect to the doctrine of the bleſſed Trinity. For tho' it is only here ſaid in general, I believe in God; yet it is obſervable, that in the moſt ancient creeds this article runs, I believe in one God; wherein they follow the ſtyle of St. *Paul* [*]; and perhaps deſignedly, in oppoſition both to heathens and hereticks; and all ſuch as might ſuppoſe more ſelf-exiſtent, or unoriginated, beings; more firſt principles, than one. But there is immediately added, Father; which, as it reſtrains the title of God, in ſome ſenſe, to one perſon only; ſo it intimates likewiſe, that the perſon thus emphatically or eminently ſtyl'd the one God, is not a ſolitary deity, but has a Son of the ſame nature with him, and exiſting from him, and with him, and in him. *Ruffin* ſays, *when you hear the word Father, underſtand it Father of a Son* [†]; meaning of his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*, as all the primitive creeds are to be underſtood [*]. At what certain time the ancient creeds were form'd or perfected, is not evident; there is no doubt, but they owe their original to the form of baptiſm, and were gradually enlarg'd as there was occaſion, with ſome difference of expreſſion, in different churches; but ſtill agreeing in the principal doctrines contain'd in them. Tho' the Roman creed, which we here undertake to explain, did not particularly, as the reſt, ſay, one God; but ſimply, God; yet it certainly imports the ſame ſenſe, and might omit the mentioning of it, either becauſe it was ſufficiently imply'd; or becauſe the church of *Rome* met with leſs oppoſition, in the article of the unity, than other churches. That the Father is the God, or the one God, intended in the article, and that *the Son is not here comprehended in the Father, is evident,* (as Biſhop *Pearſon* juſtly obſerves [†]) *not only from the original, or occaſion, but alſo from the very letter of the creed; which teaches us to believe in God the Father, and in his Son. For if the Son were included in the Father, then were the Son the Father of himſelf.*

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[*] 1 *Cor.* 8. 6.

[†] Expoſit. in Symb.

However therefore the other two perſons may be comprehended in the one God, of which I ſhall ſay more hereafter; yet there is a certain ſenſe, in which the Father only, may be ſtyl'd the one God, and is ſo ſtyl'd in all the ancient creeds, as well for the ſake of order and method, as for other great and weighty reaſons, which will appear in the ſequel.

For the fuller explication of the words of this article, it will be proper to conſider,

I. The notion of God, or what the name of God here implies.

II. The notion of the one God, and what that implies, or how it is peculiarly applicable to God the Father.

I. Let us conſider the notion of God, or what the name God here implies. *Ruffin* [‡] remarks upon this occaſion, that the name God denotes that *nature or ſubſtance, which is ſupreme, above all; is without beginning, and without end, inviſible, incorporeal, ineffable, incomprehenſible,* &c. The Arians, ſome time before, the better to diſguiſe their hereſy, and prepare the way for its reception, had pretended that the word God was nothing more than a relative word, not importing nature, but office. So that a made God, or an adopted God, might be thought to be truly God, in a proper ſignification of the word. This ſubterfuge was recurr'd to, in order to obviate a plea of the Catholicks for the divinity of Chriſt; namely, that he was not call'd God in a looſe metaphorical ſenſe, but in the ſtrict and proper acceptation of the word God; and therefore was truly and really God. This could not be deny'd without open defiance to ſcripture and tradition; and therefore they were forc'd to bring down the ſenſe of the word God, and, that they might ſerve their own hypotheſis, to make it a mere relative term. And hence it was, that the Catholicks ſo much inſiſted upon it, that the word God denoted, not the office, but, ſtrictly, the nature and ſubſtance of the perſon to whom it was apply'd; and that nothing could be truly and properly God, which was not of a divine, uncreated, immutable, and eternal ſubſtance. Hence it was, that [*] *Baſil*, the two [†] *Gregories*, [‡] *Athanaſius*, [**] *Hilary*, [††] *Auſtin*, and other catholicks, contended that the name God denoted ſubſtance, and was a word of abſolute ſignification. This pretence of the Arians hath been ſince revived and improved by the followers of *Socinus*. *Crellius*, in particular, thought it worth his while to ſpend a whole [‡‡] chapter in order to corroborate it; and it muſt be confeſs'd to be a point of ſome moment both in the Socinian and Arian controverſy. For, if the ſenſe of the word God be merely relative, denoting only power or authority; if it ſignifies only, protector, ruler, governor, or the like, then any ruler, protector, or governor, is, in the proper ſignification of the word, God; and the ſupreme God is no otherways call'd God, than as he is called Lord or King; both which titles are properly applicable to creatures, or to mortal men, only in different meaſure and degree. He that rules, governs, protects, be it more or leſs, is as truly and really a ruler, governor, or protector, as the ſupreme Governor of all; that is, if the Arian and Socinian ſenſe be right, is as much a God, tho' not ſo great or powerful a God, as God, the maker of heaven and earth. If this be ſo, two very material points are gain'd againſt the Catholicks; firſt, that no advantage can be made of the title of God apply'd to the Son, or Holy Ghoſt, in ſcripture or antiquity; and, ſecondly, that an Arian, or Socinian, may maintain his novel hypotheſis, and yet keep up to the ancient way of ſpeaking; may ſay, that the Son of God is truly, really, ſtrictly, and properly God, and believe him a creature, or a mere man, at the ſame time: Which, as it very much contributes to mollify the harſhneſs of their principles, otherways grating to chriſtian ears; ſo it may ſerve for a blind to more ignorant or inconſiderate readers.

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[*] Pertinent to which is the remark of *Hilary*. *Eccleſiæ fides ſolum verum Deum Patrem confeſſa, confitetur & Chriſtum.*

[†] P. 32.

[‡] *Naturæ ipſius vel ſubſtantiæ, quæ eſt ſuper omnia, appellatio.* Ruff. in Symb. p. 540.

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[*] Ep. 80. [†] Nazianz. orat. 36. p. 586. Nyſſ. adv. Græc. p. 82. [‡] Vol. 1. p. 228. [**] P. 922. [††] De Trin. 837. [‡‡] De Deo & attrib. c. 13. p. 31.

For theſe reaſons, it may appear very proper to examine this pretence a little farther, and to determine the true meaning of the name God, in oppoſition to ſuch falſe gloſſes and dangerous comments upon it.

The etymology of the wodr *God* in engliſh, or of *Deus* in latin, or of Θεὸς in greek, or of *Elohim* in the hebrew, will ſignify very little. The queſtion is, in what ſenſe ſcripture and antiquity have us'd the word; and whether they do not diſtinguiſh one peculiar proper ſenſe of the word, from other relative, metaphorical, and improper acceptations of it.

Irenæus is poſitive, that the ſacred writings never call any thing, or perſon, abſolutely and definitively God, but what is truly God; and what he meant by being truly God, is ſufficiently clear from his works; particularly from the laſt paragraph of his eighth chapter, book the third; where he expreſſly maintains, that no creature can be juſtly call'd God: And from the firſt chapter of the fourth book, where he interprets truly God, by naturally, God; or God by nature.

If we look into the ſcriptures themſelves, we ſhall there find that the word Θεὸς, or God, has often an abſolute ſignification, and not merely relative; particularly when the term *Jehovah* is render'd by it; a word, undoubtedly, of abſolute ſignification, and expreſſing being itſelf, or a ſelf-exiſtent ſubſtance [*].

So when it is ſaid, *I am God, and not man* [†]; and, *thou art a man, and not God* [‡]. The word God denotes the eſſence and ſubſtance of God, as being different from, and infinitely more excellent than the nature of man. For of what proper ſignification or uſe would it be to ſay, I am governor, ruler, lord, and not man? Or why ſhould the word God be thought a word of office, more than the word man, to which it is oppos'd? Add to this the famous text of St. *Paul* [**], where he rejects thoſe as no Gods, which are not Gods by nature; that is, which are not eſſentially or ſubſtantially ſuch. And, in another place [††], he diſtinguiſhes thoſe that are called Gods in the large figurative ſenſe, from him that is really and properly ſo called; that is, from him that is God by nature. So that he only is, truly and ſtrictly, God, who is God by nature; and nature is but another word for eſſence, or ſubſtance, in the place above cited.

To confirm this, let us next enquire into the ſentiments of the ante-nicene writers, who lived before the Arian controverſy; and may be allow'd as competent judges of the ſenſe of the word God in ſcripture. At leaſt, we may learn from them the ſenſe of the chriſtian church in the firſt ages of it. I have before ſhew'd what it is in the ſenſe of *Irenæus*, to be truly and properly God; and ſhall here only add one citation more from him relating to the divinity of God the Son. *The Holy Ghoſt*, ſays he[*], *has very punctually ſignified the manner of his generation, that it was of a virgin; and his ſubſtance, that he is God. Tertullian*[†] is very full and expreſs to our purpoſe. In his diſpute with *Marcion*, who aſſerted two gods, and, to ſoften the harſhneſs of his aſſertion, urg'd thoſe places of ſcripture, where the name of god is apply'd to ſeveral beſides the one ſupreme God; he tells him that the name of God was properly applicable to one ſubſtance only; and that unborn, uncreated, eternal. He obſerves, that the pagan idols were vulgarly call'd gods; but yet none of them were properly ſo; that is, none of them were gods in reſpect of ſubſtance[‡], the only thing that can properly entitle any being to that name.

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[*] *John* 6. 45. compar'd with *Iſaiah* 54. 13. and *Rom.* 4. 3. compar'd with *Gen.* 15. 6.
[†] *Hoſ.* 11. 9. [‡] *Ezek.* 28. 2. [**] *Gal.* 4. 8. [††] 1 *Cor.* 8. 5, 6.

To the ſame purpoſe, in his diſpute with the heretick *Hermogenes*, who aſſerted matter to be co-eval with God, he ſays[**], *the name God is a name denoting ſubſtance, and is thereby diſtinguiſh'd from the name Lord, or Dominus, denoting power and dominion.*

HERMOGENES pretended, that God had always been God and Lord, which words being relative, and expreſſing dominion, muſt imply that there was always ſomething for God to have dominion over, and therefore matter was co-eternal with God.

TERTULLIAN allows the argument with reſpect to the name of Lord, and freely acknowledges that God was not properly Lord, till ſomething exiſted over which he became Lord. But it would have been ſhocking to have ſaid, that there was ever a time when God was not God; or that he had not been God from everlaſting; which is a neceſſary conſequence, if God be a mere relative word. *Tertullian's*[††] anſwer is certainly very wiſe and juſt; and agreeable to the orthodox ſentiments of all antiquity. For, how ever ſome perſons might make it a queſtion, whether God was always Father, as the Arians did, and *Tertullian* himſelf ſeems to do in this very chapter, tho' in a different ſenſe from what the Arians pretended afterwards: I ſay, how ever ſome might make a queſtion of the former point; yet none of them ever doubted, whether God was always God; which makes it clear to a demonſtration, that they did not underſtand the word God, as a mere relative word, but as a word of abſolute ſignification, expreſſing ſubſtance.

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[*] *Diligenter igitur ſignificavit Spiritus Sanctus——generationem ejus quæ eſt ex virgine, & ſubſtantiam quoniam Deus.* Iren. l. 3. c. 21. p. 217.

[†] *Non nomini Dei, nec ſono, nec notæ nominis hujus, ſummum magnum in creatore defendo; ſed ipſi ſubſtantiæ cui nomen hoc contigit. Hanc invenies ſolam innatam infectam, ſolam æternam, &c.——Deus jam vocari obtinuit ſubſtantia cui adſcribo, &c.* Contr. Marc. 368.

[‡] *Deus nemo eſt re, quâ Deus dicitur.*

[**] C. 3. p. 234.

[††] He therefore obſerves; *Deus ſubſtantiæ ipſius nomen, id eſt divinitatis: Dominus verò non ſubſtantiæ, ſed poteſtatis.*

If any farther proof be neceſſary in ſo clear a point, it may eaſily be had from innumerable paſſages of the ancients, wherever they expreſs their notion of what is truly and properly God, as they frequently do in their diſputes with the Gentiles, in order to ſhew that their gods were, in truth, no gods. But I ſhall chuſe to inſiſt upon one argument only, which will both ſhew in what ſenſe they always underſtood the word God, and that they apply'd it to the Son, in the very ſame ſenſe. It was a conſtant rule and maxim with them, that whatever is begotten of God is God *. This is ſaid frequently by moſt of the † ante-nicene, as well as poſt-nicene fathers. *Novatian*'s manner of treating on this argument is worth obſerving. He tells us ‡, that the nature or reaſon of the thing itſelf muſt convince us, that as he that is born of man, is man; ſo he that is of God, muſt be God. Now it is impoſſible to give any tolerable account of this common maxim of the ancient writers, if they took the word God in the relative ſenſe only, or did not underſtand it ſtrictly to denote ſubſtance. In the citations from *Irenæus*, *Euſebius*, and *Tertullian*, it is not ſaid, he that is begotten, but that thing (or that ſubſtance) that is begotten. Beſides, if it were ſaid; that the perſon who is begotten of God, muſt be God, as it is ſaid, or meant, in the other writers referr'd to; it is not only reaſonable, but neceſſary, to interpret it in the ſame ſenſe with the former. For it is as ridiculous to pretend, that every ſon of a ruler muſt be a ruler, or the ſon of a governor a governor, or of a lord a lord; as it would be to aſſert, that any perſon is a king, only becauſe he is the ſon of a king. How far the argument will bear with relation to the divinity of God the Son, is not now the queſtion; but it certainly proves thus much, that the ante-nicene writers (and as to the poſt-nicene there's no diſpute) did not underſtand the word God in a mere relative ſenſe, but thought it imply'd ſomething of the nature and ſubſtance of the perſon to whom it was aſcrib'd, as well as dominion; and that dominion imply'd but the ſecondary and conſequential, not the principal and primary notion of a perſon that is truly and really God.

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* Thus *Irenæus* expreſſes himſelf; Τὸ γὰρ ἐκ Θεοῦ γεννηθὲν Θεός ἐςι. p. 41. *Euſebius* thus; Τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ Θεός ἐςι. Eccl. theol. p. 72, 123. *Tertullian* thus; *Quod de Deo profectum eſt Deus eſt.* Apol. c. 21. p. 20. Ed. Rigalt.

† Juſtin. Mart. p. 53, 75, 260, 278, 280. Edit. Sylb. Theoph. Antioch. l. 1. c. 1. l. 2. p. 100. Clem. Alex. p. 113, 86. Novat. c. 11. Orig. de princip. l. 1. c. 2. Com. in Col. p. 56.

‡ *Ut enim præſcripſit ipſa natura hominem credendum eſſe qui ex homine ſit: ita eadem natura præſcripſit & Deum credendum eſſe qui ex Deo ſit: ne ſi non & Deus fuerit, cùm ex Deo ſit, jam nec homo ſit licèt ex homine fuerit, & in alterutro utrumque periclitetur, dum alterutrum altero fidem perdidiſſe convincitur.*

The argument of *Crellius* * drawn from the relative terms, frequently and properly join'd with the word God; as when it is ſaid, our God, their God, your God, or the like, is of very little weight; unleſs it can be ſhewn, that a word of abſolute ſignification cannot be uſed relatively; or that the ſame word may not have either an abſolute or a relative ſignification, according as it is differently apply'd; or may not ſometimes have both together. Suppoſe the word God to carry in it the idea of an infinite, eternal, uncreated governor; it is manifeſt, that it may expreſs both the nature and the office; and, in reſpect of the latter, may be properly join'd with relative terms. And thus when we ſay our God, or your God, it does not barely mean one who has ſupreme dominion over us; but one whoſe nature and perfections are the ground of that dominion; whoſe eſſence or ſubſtance is as truly divine, as his dominion. So, upon the whole matter, when we declare in the creed that the perſon of the Father is God, we do not only mean that his office is to rule, and that he has dominion over us; but that his ſubſtance, nature, and perfections are infinite. And ſo we are to underſtand of every other perſon, that we believe to be properly called God.

Sect. II.

Of God the Father, conſider'd as one God, with reſpect to the doctrine of the Trinity.

I Am next to conſider the notion of one God, and in what ſenſe that title is peculiarly applicable to the perſon of the Father. The ancient creeds, as hath been before obſerv'd, read one God the Father; and moſt of them likewiſe one Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*; as does the nicene creed: And this, no doubt, in oppoſition to other gods or lords, improperly ſo call'd; as in that text of St. *Paul* †, from whence the expreſſion ſeems to be taken. But why is the title of God peculiarly reſerv'd to the Father, when it is plain from other places of ſcripture, and even from this very place likewiſe, that the Son is properly God, as well as the Father? The deſign of the ſcriptures, is to teach us, that there is but one God abſolutely, which is primarily to be conſider'd in the perſon of the Father, as the root and fountain of the divinity; not excluding whatever eſſentially and inſeparably belongs to him; but only abſtracting from the conſideration of any thing farther. This manner of ſpeaking is well accounted for by *Euſebius* *, who, with reſpect to the real divinity of the Son, at leaſt, was certainly very orthodox. He obſerves how the faith in the one God had been taught and inculcated, both in the Old and New Teſtament, in oppoſition to the Polytheiſm of the Gentiles; and that the Father was the one God principally intended in both. But how? Was it excluſive of the Son's divinity, or in oppoſition to it? No; but to idols only. " In like manner, ſays he, now in our diſputes " with the pagans, we are uſed to wave the conſideration of what " relates to Chriſt's divinity (that muſt be his meaning) to a pro" per ſeaſon, and to content our ſelves for the preſent, only with " confuting the Polytheiſm of the heathens, and demonſtrating " the unity of the Godhead in oppoſition to it. The words are not ſtrictly tranſlated, but the ſenſe of them faithfully obſerved.

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* P. 85.

† 1 *Cor.* 8. 6.

FROM the like reaſon, it may probably be preſumed, that the creeds conſider the one God as primarily and principally ſubſiſting in the perſon of the Father, the fountain of unity, the root and ſource of every thing, and of every perſon; even of the Son and Holy Spirit, exiſting from him, and in him.

I am ſenſible, that the point now under conſideration has been much diſputed in the chriſtian church; and therefore ſhall not ſatisfy my ſelf with this general and ſuperficial account of it, but deſcend, for the benefit of my reader, to give it a more full and diſtinct examination. Some have been ſo weak, as to imagine, if they could but ſhew that the Father is frequently repreſented in ſcripture and antiquity as the one God, there would be nothing more requir'd towards overthrowing the doctrine of a Trinity of Perſons in the Unity of the Godhead; not conſidering, that tho' the Father may be primarily, or in a certain reſpect, ſo repreſented, yet he is not ſo ſolely, or in a ſenſe excluſive of the Son or the Holy Ghoſt. For the ſame ſcriptures, and the ſame ancient writers, which ſometimes ſtyle the father the one God, do likewiſe either expreſſly, or by neceſſary implication, make the whole three perſons together, the one God. The beſt way of clearing up this matter, will be to enquire, what grounds there are from ſcripture, antiquity, or reaſon, for ſtyling the Father, in a certain ſenſe, the one God; and what alſo for ſtyling the whole three Perſons, the one God, in another ſenſe.

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* Eccl. theol. l. 2. c. 22.

I. We have the authority of ſcripture for ſtyling the Father emphatically or eminently, not by way of excluſion, the one God. I need not be particular in citing the many paſſages, where God abſolutely ſignifies the Father, or where he is call'd the one or only God. The texts referr'd to * are remarkable, and will be ſufficient to this purpoſe, without mentioning any other.

All the diſpute is, whether theſe texts do not ſpeak of God the Father as one God, in ſo abſolute a ſenſe, that neither the Son, nor the Holy Ghoſt, can be properly called God, nor a Trinity of Perſons, if we may argue from the natural force and ſignification of words, be ſuppos'd to ſubſiſt in the unity of the divine nature? As to the firſt of theſe texts, it may eaſily be accounted for. When it is ſaid, *the Word was*, in the beginning, *with God*, we readily grant, that the Father is here call'd abſolutely God; but his being call'd ſo, cannot, we ſay, be interpreted to exclude the Son from having a perſonal ſubſiſtence in the Godhead; for this evident reaſon; that in the following part of the verſe, *and the Word was God*, the Son, who is acknowledg'd to be the ſame perſon with *the Word*, is call'd God in a ſenſe no leſs abſolute, than that wherein the Father is call'd God in the former part of it. The other text cited from the ſame apoſtle, *this is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent*, may be thought more difficultly reconcileable with the doctrine, which aſſerts more Perſons than one in the Godhead; ſince the Father ſeems here ſtyl'd not ſo much abſolutely God, as directly in contradiſtinction to the divinity of any other Perſon, and in particular to that of the Son. But neither ſhall we find any great difficulty in what is here objected, if we can but prove, that the title of true God is any where in ſcripture expreſſly attributed to the Son: For then it will be neceſſary that the word *only* ſhould not be underſtood in a ſenſe excluſive of the Perſon of the Son, but in oppoſition to falſe gods, or as it is in the primary and more eminent ſenſe applicable to the Father. Otherways there would be two, and both of them, in a proper ſenſe, true Gods.

Now that Chriſt is expreſſly ſtyl'd the true God, is evident from that famous text. *We know that the Son of God is come, and hath*

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* *John* 1. 1.—17. 3. 1 *Cor.* 8. 6. *Epheſ.* 1. 3, 4.

given us an underſtanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him, that is true; even in his Son Jeſus Chriſt. This is the true God and eternal life. The moſt material objections againſt the ſenſe which the orthodox put upon theſe words, may be reduc'd to the three following particulars. That,

I. This is the only place, wherein it is ſo much as pretended, that Chriſt is ſtyl'd the true God.

II. The principal deſign of the apoſtle is not to ſpeak here concerning the divinity of the Son of God, but to caution men againſt idolatry.

III. That the relative *this* may not improperly, according to a uſual way of interpreting ſcripture, be referr'd to the Father.

I. The firſt objection is of no force, or rather very trifling. For if this place, ſince it is not ſo much as pretended to be ſpurious, or in any material point corrupted, do really ſpeak of Chriſt as true God, it is of equal authority to prove the truth of his divinity in the higheſt ſenſe, as if it had been deliver'd in ſeveral other places of the holy ſcriptures, and expreſſly in the ſame terms; except the Holy Spirit ſhould be ſuppos'd, which is impoſſible, both in the nature of the thing, and by the confeſſion of our adverſaries, to contradict himſelf. One propoſition clearly reveal'd in the inſpir'd writings, is of the ſame force to perſuade our aſſent, as if it had been repeated in every page of them. But whether this place do really ſpeak of Chriſt as true God, will appear more evident even on occaſion of the two following objections. For,

II. If it be the principal deſign of the apoſtle, in this place, to caution men againſt the worſhip of idols, it is ſtrange that he ſhould expreſs himſelf after a manner, if Chriſt be not truly God, moſt proper to miſlead men into idolatry; by declaring him to be ſo, according to the moſt natural and obvious ſenſe of the words. It had been ſufficient to his purpoſe of condemning idolatry, if we argue only from his intention in theſe words, to have aſſerted, that there are three Perſons in the unity of the divine nature; as much as if he had expreſſly aſſerted, that there is but one divine Perſon. And therefore his deſign in theſe words, if it was principally to condemn the worſhip of falſe gods, can be no argument againſt the truth or reaſonableneſs of ſuch an aſſertion. The one God of the Chriſtians, in oppoſition to idols, is the whole three Perſons together in the unity of the Godhead. Suppoſing, therefore, what we have as yet a right to ſuppoſe, that Chriſt is truly God, it cannot be objected, that the apoſtle, by calling him ſo, would leſſen the force of his caution againſt idolatry, or the worſhip of falſe gods. But rather, I ſay, a ſtrong proof might be drawn from the very ſcope of his argument, that Chriſt is in a true, and in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, God: For otherways he had propos'd it after ſuch a manner, as, to the moſt natural apprehenſions of thoſe whom he argued to, would not ſo much have defeated the great end of it, as have introduc'd an error in direct contradiction to the truth, he was going to eſtabliſh.

III. As to what is pretended, in the laſt place, that the relative *this* may not improperly be referr'd to the Father, it does not by any means follow from hence, that therefore, according to the moſt natural order and conſtruction of the words, it ought to do ſo: Nay, the very reaſon aſſign'd why it ſhould do ſo, (namely, that the relative does not always in the ſcriptures neceſſarily refer to the immediate antecedent) proves that the interpretation, which our adverſaries put upon theſe words, is contrary to the common rules of interpreting them. For the ordinary method, in this caſe, is never to be departed from, except where there is, in the natural reaſon of the thing, ſome viſible neceſſity for it. But there is ſo far from being a neceſſity of our departing here from the common interpretation on any ſuch account, or in reſpect to any unreaſonable conſequences, which would follow upon our keeping to it, that it is at once moſt agreeable to the natural order of the words in the text, and another character of our Lord, confeſſedly on both ſides here given him. For he is deſcrib'd in the abſtract, and in repeated terms, as *him that is true*; which we think a character that can only be apply'd and properly belong to the true God. It is alſo one of the characters which God appropriates to himſelf, by way of diſtinction, in the holy ſcriptures, that *he is the true God*; but no expreſſion could have been more ſtrong or emphatical to denote that character, than that which is here apply'd to the Son, and, as we obſerv'd, in repeated terms, *him that is true*. This is what we argue, that God, who has declar'd himſelf jealous of his honour, would not have given the glory of a name ſo peculiar to the divine nature, to another; to any creature or perſon whatever who was not God: And that if the Son be *him who is true*, abſtractedly, and in the ſublime ſenſe of the words, which the repetition of them ſtill more powerfully imports, then the Father, conſider'd as having a diſtinct eſſence from the Son, cannot be only, or indeed eſſentially, true God. A created intelligent being may be ſaid, in a ſenſe, to be true, as he is divinely commiſſion'd or inſpir'd, or as he thinks and ſpeaks the truth: But to be call'd him that is true emphatically, or in an abſolute ſenſe, which is the ſame as if he were denominated *truth*, in the abſtract, is a character which ought not to be appropriated to any other being than the true God. It is not therefore of great importance to our preſent enquiry, whether *Chriſt* be omitted in the original text or not *. The word Son being ſufficient to diſtinguiſh the perſon ſpoken of, and to connect the relative with the character here apply'd, and properly belonging to him.

FROM all which, we may conclude, that the following text of the ſame apoſtle, which has been commonly underſtood as parallel to that I am conſidering, ought to be explain'd to the ſame effect. *This is life eternal, to know thee, the only true God; and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent.* From which words, it has been argued, that the Father is called the true God, not only abſolutely, but directly in contradiſtinction to the Son. This is granted on both ſides. But then, we ſay, the Father is here contradiſtinguiſh'd from the Son, not in oppoſition to his divinity, but to his human nature, which he aſſum'd, in order to qualify him for his miſſion from the Father, to tranſact with mankind. It is one thing to conſider our Lord in his divine Perſon, and another thing to conſider him in his mediatorial, or with reſpect to which he is here more eſpecially deſcrib'd, his prophetical office. There is even ſome difference to be made when we ſpeak of his divinity, abſolutely conſider'd, and of the order according to which he ſubſiſts in the divine nature. In the firſt ſenſe, as God, he is equal to the Father; as a Prophet ſent by the Father, inferior to him. And I do not know whether it may not alſo be allow'd, in the laſt place, that, conſider'd as the Son, or ſecond Perſon in the Godhead, according to the natural ideas we have of order, and if we reſtrain them wholly to it, *the Father is greater than he.*

THE diſtinction eſpecially between the dignity of Chriſt, conſider'd as God, and as a Prophet ſent from God, is ſufficient to juſtify our explication of this text as denoting the divine nature, not in contradiſtinction to Chriſt, as God, but as acting in his prophetical capacity, or by virtue of his miſſion.

THERE will be ſtill leſs difficulty, if we attend to what has been ſaid in explaining the laſt text †. Where God is ſtyl'd abſolutely *God, and the Father of Jeſus Chriſt*, after ſuch a manner, as may be proper to ſhew, that theſe expreſſions do not exclude the divinity of the Son; and that they are ſpoken of the Father, not in contradiſtinction to his divinity, but to his character, or relation to the Father, in one or more of the foregoing reſpects.

I ſhall only obſerve upon the whole matter, that the argument againſt a plurality of Perſons in the Godhead, becauſe the Father is ſtyl'd abſolutely God, or the only true God, really proves too

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[*] Dr. *Mills*, tho' he retains the word Χριστὸς in the text, yet obſerves it was wanting in the *Alexandrian*, and vulgar copies.

[†] *Epheſ.* 1. 3, 4.

much; and must do so, even in the opinion of thoſe who urge it. If it be reaſonable or neceſſary to conclude from theſe expreſſions, that there is but one Perſon of the Godhead, it will prove, for the ſame reaſon, and contrary to what our adverſaries will admit, that the Son is neither God nor Lord; becauſe it is ſaid abſolutely, *that the Lord he is God* *; and *the true God* †. And the queſtion is put excluſively of all other perſons, *who is God, but the Lord* ‡? Now in this way of arguing, if there be any force in it, the Father himſelf will not be God. For ſince there is no God, but the Lord, and our Saviour is confeſſedly in ſcripture ſtyl'd the Lord, and *one Lord*, there can conſequently be no other Perſon properly ſtyl'd God, but himſelf.

II. LET us, in the next place, conſider, to our preſent purpoſe, ſome few of the numerous authorities, which might be cited from the ante-nicene fathers, who religiouſly follow'd the language of the ſcriptures, as to the preſent article. This is confeſſedly the ſtyle of the ancient creeds down to the nicene creed; as of that creed itſelf, and of others that were ſubſequent to it. And the primitive writers, tho' they often call the Son God, and ſometimes the Holy Ghoſt, God; yet when they name Father and Son together, they generally call the firſt, God, abſolutely; and the other, either Lord only, or God of God, or Son of God, or the like: And when they ſpeak of the third Perſon, they call him generally the Holy Spirit, or the Spirit of God, reſerving, as it were, the title of God, as the more peculiar title of Father, chiefly to the Father.

A good account of which may be had from *Tertullian* and *Origen*. The words of the former are, ** "I will not ſay Gods, nor "Lords, in the plural number; but will make the apoſtle's ex"preſſion a rule for mine. If Father and Son are to be named to"gether, I will ſtyle the Father God, and *Jeſus Chriſt* Lord. Yet "when I ſpeak of Chriſt alone, I may call him God, after the "example of the ſame apoſtle, whoſe words are, *of whom Chriſt* "*was, who is over all, God, bleſſed for ever* ††.

ORIGEN ſpeaks to this purpoſe, in anſwer to ſuch as charg'd the Catholicks with believing more Gods than one. ‡‡ "That which "is ſelf-exiſtent (underived) is * God abſolutely; for which rea"ſon our Saviour ſays, in his prayer to the Father, *that they*

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* *Pſal.* 100. 3. † *Jer.* 10. 10. ‡ 2 *Sam.* 22. 32. ** Tertul. Contr. Prax. c. 13. p. 57. †† *Rom.* 9. 6.

‡‡ Λεκτέον γὰρ αὐτοῖς, ὅτι τότε μὲν Αὐτόθεος ὁ Θεός ἐστι. Διόπερ καὶ ὁ σωτήρ φησιν ἐν τῇ πρὸς τὸν πατέρα εὐχῇ, ἵνα γινώσκωσί σε τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν Θεόν. Πᾶν δὲ τὸ παρὰ τὸ Αὐτόθεος, μετοχῇ τῆς ἐκείνης θεότητος θεοποιούμενον οὐχ ὁ Θεός, ἀλλὰ Θεὸς κυριώτερον ἂν λέγοιτο. Orig. in Joh. p. 46.

* ὁ Θεός.

“ *may know thee, the only true God.* But whatever is God beſides that ſelf-exiſtent perſon, being ſo only by communication of his divinity, cannot ſo properly be call'd God abſolutely; but rather God of God. The meaning of both theſe writers is the ſame; either Father or Son is properly God, as equally having that nature or ſubſtance, which only can denominate a perſon really divine. The ground of this diſtinction is primarily and underivatively in one, derivatively in the other. Wherefore the former is God abſolutely and eminently, as the firſt Perſon; the other only God of God. This doctrine of the ante-nicene fathers was ſo far from being contradicted by the Catholicks ſucceeding them, that they all receiv'd and taught it. The nicene creed expreſſly confirms it.

Alexander, biſhop of *Alexandria* [‡], the great ſcourge of *Arius*, is as full for the prerogative of the Father in the true ſenſe, and of his being the only underiv'd Perſon in the Godhead, as any writier before him, or after him.

Hilary, another zealous Trinitarian, expreſſes himſelf to this purpoſe. “ Our making the Son God, is no objection againſt the Father's being the one God. He is the one God, becauſe the only underiv'd God [**].

Athanasius himſelf frequently ſays the ſame thing. I need but cite two or three paſſages from him to this effect [††]. “ When the Father is ſaid to be one or only God [‡‡]; thoſe expreſſions are very right: Becauſe he is really the one, and only, and the firſt God; not excluſive of the Son. In another place, “ God is one, becauſe there is but one Father. And again, “ He is the only God, becauſe he is God of himſelf, and the only fountain of the Godhead.

Basil [*] and *Epiphanius* [†] both ſay, that there are not two Gods, becauſe not two Fathers. The ſame *Baſil* ſays, in another place, of the Holy Spirit, that [‡] *He is not the God* abſolutely ſo called, and by way of eminence; *but only the Spirit of God, and with God.* All which expreſſions are very orthodox. Conformably to which, *Euſebius* ſays of God the Son; that he was not that *God over all*; that is, he was not the firſt Perſon, not the Father, primarily and eminently ſtyl'd [**], God. And from hence, by the way, we may underſtand what ſome of the ante-nicene writers mean, by denying the Son to be the *God over all* *. Notwithſtanding which, the fifth verſe of the ninth chapter to the *Romans*, was, in a manner, univerſally underſtood of Chriſt, as being *over all, God, bleſſed for ever*. The title of *God over all*, was never thought too high for the Son, in any other ſenſe; but as it was made the cuſtomary appellation to denote the Perſon of the Father, of which more hereafter †. It would be endleſs to cite all the paſſages from the poſt-nicene writers, where they ſtyle the Father the one God, or ſometimes, the true and only God, which *Epiphanius* ‡ himſelf did not ſcruple, not to mention others. The doctrine of the Father's being primarily the one God, was never deny'd by any ſober catholick writers; and therefore it is mere trifling for our modern unitarians to inſiſt ſo much upon it; or to imagine that they can gain any advantage to their cauſe by it. The church was always careful to maintain the Father's ſuperiority under that character; but never pretended that there were three principles, three abſolute, original, independent divinities: But condemn'd that doctrine for downright Tritheiſm. Indeed, the doctrine, (which I am to ſpeak to preſently) that the three Perſons are but one God, meeting with the greateſt oppoſition, eſpecially from the time of *Arius*; it became the great concern of the Catholicks to maintain and eſtabliſh that doctrine. And the other doctrine, tho' very conſiſtent with it, and very neceſſary to be aſſented to, came by degrees to be leſs inſiſted upon. So we find it, in a manner, paſs'd over in the Athanaſian creed, in the eighth century; and it is but tranſiently mention'd by the ſchoolmen; which gave great advantage to *Socinus*, and his followers, upon the firſt publication of their hereſy. For it being almoſt forgotten, how, or in what ſenſe, the Father was ſtyl'd the one, or only God, by ſcripture and antiquity; it appear'd, in a manner, inconſiſtent for the Father to be one God, and three perſons to be one God likewiſe. *Crellius* his celebrated book runs all upon this topick; and he has ſufficiently prov'd that the Father is, in a certain reſpect, the one God. But the inference, which he would draw from it, to the excluſion of the two other Perſons from the Godhead, turns upon mere fallacy and abuſe of words.

[‡] Apud Theodoret. l. 1. c. 18. Valeſ.

[**] *Ob id, unus Deus; quia ex ſe Deus.* Hilar. Trin. l. 4. p. 836.

[††] Athanaſ. vol. 1. p. 556.

[‡‡] *Exod.* 3. 14. *Deut.* 32. *Iſaiah* 44. 6.

[*] Baſ. orat. contr. Sabell. 27.

[†] Epiph. vol. 1. p. 615, 742. Edit. Petav.

[‡] Οὔτε αὐτὸς ὁ Θεὸς, ἀλλὰ Θεοῦ πνεῦμα, ϗ παρὰ Θεοῦ. Hom. 17. in Sanat. Bapt. tom. 1. p. 511.

[**] ὁ Θεὸς.

III. After having cited theſe teſtimonies to ſhew in what ſenſe the Father is ſtyl'd the one God, I need not inſiſt upon the reaſons why he was ſo ſtyl'd; thoſe very reaſons appearing from the teſtimonies themſelves, and being interwoven in them. The Father is the one God, and, as we ſee, ſtyl'd the one God; as he is the one head, original, cauſe, root, ſource, fountain of every thing, and even of the two other Perſons. The divinity of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt, is the Father's divinity, as being deriv'd from him; the ſubſtance of the two Perſons, as being deriv'd from the Father, is the Father's ſubſtance. This conſider'd; no wonder if the Father be eminently ſtyl'd the one God, or if the Godhead be often conſider'd as ſubſiſting primarily in the firſt Perſon, without explicitly mentioning the communication of it to two other Perſons; but leaving that as ſufficiently intimated, and virtually and implicitly underſtood in the word *Father*. Having ſeen, what ground and foundation there is from ſcripture and antiquity, and the reaſon of the thing, for calling the Father the one God; I am next to conſider,

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* Ignat. ad Trall. Tarſ. Phil. Juſt. Mart. apoſtol. conſt. 6, 25.

† See Euſeb. E. H. l. 8. c. 11.

‡ Vol. 1. p. 70.

Sect. III.

Upon what grounds, and in what ſenſe, we call the whole three Perſons, the one God?

IT will contribute very much towards clearing up the former point, that we ſhould proceed upon this enquiry. Now it is very evident from the titles, epithets, attributes, and powers aſcribed to the three Perſons in holy ſcripture, that each Perſon is properly, that is, according to what I have ſaid above, ſubſtantially, or eſſentially God. The ſame doctrine may be prov'd from the form of invocating them, of baptiſm, of the doxologies; and from other topicks. Yet ſcripture has no where taught us to ſay three Gods, or three Lords; but has expreſly and frequently told us, that there is but one God. What hypotheſis ſoever we take, Arian, or Socinian, or any other beſides this, which the patrons of it pretend to found upon ſcripture, they muſt be oblig'd to acknowledge more Gods than one; either co-ordinate, or which quite deſtroys the idea of infinite perfection, having only a dependent arbitrary exiſtence. The catholick ſcheme alone has ſo admirably guarded againſt all extremes, and is ſo well adjuſted to ſcripture and reaſon, that it can neither be chargeable with Tritheiſm, properly ſo call'd; nor with Polytheiſm in general; nor with the doctrine of a Trinity purely nominal, and without any real foundation; the Catholicks owning but one Father, or one Fountain of the divinity; and, in conſequence thereof, aſſerting all the three Perſons to be one God. Some have had aſſurance enough to pretend, grounding their pretence upon what has been obſerved above, that the Father only is the one God, excluſive of the other two Perſons, and have not ſcrupled to ſay very ignorantly, to ſpeak in the ſofteſt terms, that the firſt chriſtians knew of no other one God, than the Father of our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*. On the contrary, nothing is more certain, than that the primitive writers did both know and aſſert Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, to be one God; many, expreſſly and directly; almoſt all of them, implicitly and conſequentially. I ſhall not inſiſt on that remarkable, and early teſtimony, concerning the faith of the chriſtian church, and their ſtyling the three Perſons one God, given us in way of ridicule by *Lucian*, or the author of a dialogue under his name; but proceed to chriſtian writers, ſuch as expreſſly ſtyl'd either Father and Son, or all three Perſons together, one God. For, the objection againſt the ſtyle, and manner of ſpeaking, equally affects one, or other; and as to the thing itſelf, it would be clear enough, tho' they had not uſed that particular way of expreſſing it, from numberleſs other paſſages. There is no diſpute about this matter down from the time of the nicene council. Every body knows how uſual it is with *Athanaſius*, *Hilary*, *Auſtin*, and all the catholick writers at the time of that council, and ſince, to call the three Perſons, or the Trinity, one God. We are only to enquire, whether they then introduc'd a new language, or manner of expreſſion; or, whether they follow'd the dialect in uſe with their foreſathers. I ſhall begin with *Irenæus*, that able champion for the chriſtian faith, in the ſecond century.

It is frequent with him to ſpeak of the Father and Son together, in the ſingular number, and to make them both one God. * "He who was ador'd by the prophets as the living God; he is the God of the living; and his Word, who ſpake to *Moſes*, *&c.* ——Chriſt therefore, with the Father, is the God of the living, who ſpake to *Moſes*, *&c.*——" One and the ſame God the Father, and his Word, always aſſiſting to mankind, *&c.*——" He that made all things, is, with his Word, juſtly call'd the only God and Lord.

And, that it may not be ſuſpected that the Son is here only figuratively or improperly call'd one God with the Father, as deriving his authority and power from him, tho' far inferior to him; it is obſervable, that *Irenæus* expreſſly makes the Son uncreated, eternal, and truly God. And that he look'd upon nothing as truly God, but what is naturally and eſſentially ſo, has been before ſhewn; and alſo, that an inferior God is the ſame, in the ſenſe of this excellent writer, as no God; that is, it implies, in other words, a contradiction. If the reader demands ſtill any farther ſatisfaction in ſo clear a caſe, it may be added, that *Ireneus* aſſerts the Son to be the creator and maker of man, of angels, and of all things; the teſtimonies to which purpoſe are ſo numerous, that they need not be particularly cited. And if you would know from him what creator imports, he obſerves [*], that the devil could not create any thing, being himſelf a creature. And, in another place [†], laying down the difference between God and man, he ſays, one creates, the other is created; and then adds [‡], that he who is able to create is of an immutable ſubſtance, both, as the words may be underſtood, with reſpect to his nature and his duration.

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* *Qui igitur à prophetis adorabatur Deus vivus, hic eſt vivorum Deus & verbum ejus, qui loquutus eſt Moyſi, &c.*——*Ipſe igitur Chriſtus cum Patre vivorum eſt Deus, qui loquutus eſt Moyſi, &c.* Iren. p. 232.——*Cum ſit unus & idem Deus Pater, & verbum ejus ſemper adſiſtens humano generi, &c.* p. 266.——*Is qui omnia fecerit, cum verbo ſuo juſtè dicatur Deus & Dominus ſolus.* p. 183. vid. & p. 184.

Since therefore Father and Son are, according to *Irenæus*, one and the ſame God, tho' two Perſons, and each of them God in the ſame ſenſe; we may reaſonably conclude, that the catholick church, in his time, neither thought there was any ſoleciſm or impropriety in ſtyling more Perſons than one, one God; nor any abſurdity in the thing itſelf. It would be very eaſy to ſhew, that he comprehended all the three Perſons in the one God, tho' he does not ſay ſo in expreſs words; yet from ſuch expreſſions as theſe. *He made the world, by himſelf, that is, by his Word, and by his Wiſdom* [**]. By which, as himſelf interprets it [††], he means the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, whom he often calls the *hands of God* [‡‡], at once to expreſs both their conſubſtantiality with the Father, and their joint operations: I ſay, from many ſuch paſſages as theſe, which, at the ſame time, are ſufficiently guarded againſt any Sabellian evaſion, it is manifeſt, that this judicious and ancient Father of the chriſtian church believ'd the doctrine of three Perſons in the unity of the Godhead as fully, and aſſerted it almoſt as clearly and expreſſly, as afterwards *Athanaſius* himſelf. So that one might juſtly wonder, with what attention thoſe perſons read, or with what conſcience they write, who pretend any authorities from him in favour of the Arian hereſy. Let us proceed, in the next place, to

Athenagoras, whom we have poſtpon'd a little, for the ſake of *Irenæus*. In anſwer to the common calumny of the pagans, who charg'd the chriſtians with atheiſm for deſpiſing the heathen gods; he anſwers thus. [*] *We are not atheiſts, in as much as we believe the Creator of all things, and his Word, to be God.* He had ſaid before, in anſwer to the ſame objection. [†] *Who can but wonder to hear us charg'd with atheiſm, who declare there is God the Father, and God the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt?*

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[*] P. 288. [†] P. 240.

[‡] *Et quidem, qui facit ſemper idem eſt.*

[**] P. 163. [††] P. 253. [‡‡] Iren. p. 228, 253, 298, 299, 312, 327.

What I am to remark, is, that in the firſt citation, he ſpeaks of Father and Son together, and calls them God, in the ſingular number, not Gods. From whence we may again obſerve, the manner of expreſſion was not thought improper at that time; and that Father and Son were each of them properly God, one as much as the other, and in the ſame ſenſe. The ſecond citation is not ſo expreſs and full to our purpoſe; but both together may ſerve to illuſtrate and ſtrengthen each other. And ſince he here brings in all the three Perſons in anſwer to the ſame charge of atheiſm; it muſt appear by neceſſary inference and implication, that he believ'd the whole three Perſons equally comprehended and ſubſiſting in the one God. To confirm which, I might obſerve farther, that the ſame author deſcribes the Son as being one with the Father [‡]; uncreated and eternal [**]; and that he makes both Son and Holy Ghoſt emanations from the Father, as light from fire [††]: With a deſign, by all theſe expreſſions, to ſignify their perfect unity, and conſubſtantiality. And yet to guard againſt Sabellianiſm, as it was afterwards call'd, he ſpeaks more than once concerning the order according to which they are diſtinguiſh'd [‡‡].

From *Athenagoras*, I deſcend to *Tertullian*, who is ſo full and clear to our purpoſe, that hardly any of the poſt-nicene writers can be more. [*] *It is,* ſays he, *mere Judaiſm to believe one God in ſuch a ſenſe, as not to include the Son, and after the Son, the Holy Ghoſt.* And a little after, he adds; *the three together make one God.* In the ſecond chapter of the ſame book againſt *Praxeas* [†], he calls all the three, one God. It would be needleſs to make out by inferences and deductions, that he means eſſentially, or ſubſtantially one God. It is his avow'd declar'd doctrine, wherever he ſpeaks of the ſubject [‡], that all the three Perſons are one God; having all the ſame root or principle, they are one by unity of ſubſtance. And it may be remember'd, from what has been obſerv'd in another place, that *Tertullian*, upon his principles, could not expreſs himſelf in different terms. He allows nothing to be God but one uncreated, infinite, eternal ſubſtance; nor any dominion to be really divine, that is inferior to the ſupreme. His very calling of the Son, or Holy Spirit, God, both which he does over and over *, were alone ſufficient to juſtify our other inferences. And, I will venture to add, that the ſame inferences may be juſtly drawn, with reſpect to any other of the catholick ante-nicene writers, who have uſed the like ſtyle; and that any man may be ſafely challeng'd to diſprove them. But I paſs on to

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[*] Οὐκ ἐσμὲν ἄθεοι, Θεὸν ἄγοντες τὸν ποιητὴν τοῦδε τοῦ παντὸς καὶ τὸν παρ' αὐτοῦ λόγον. Apol. ſ. 26. p. 122.

[†] Τίς οὖν οὐκ ἂν ἀπορήσαι λέγοντας Θεὸν Πατέρα καὶ υἱὸν Θεὸν καὶ πνεῦμα ἅγιον——ἀκούσας ἀθέους καλουμένους. p. 40.

[‡] P. 38. [**] P. 39. [††] P. 40, 67. [‡‡] P. 40, 46.

[*] *Judaicæ fidei iſta res, ſic unum Deum credere ut Filium adnumerare ei nolis, & poſt Filium, Spiritum.——Tres crediti, unum Deum ſiſtunt.* Contr. Prax. p. 518. Rigalt.

[†] P. 501.

[‡] *Unus omnia, dum ex uno omnia per ſubſtantiæ ſcilicet unitatem.* p. 501.

CLEMENT of *Alexandria*, contemporary with *Tertullian*; and altogether as full and expreſs to our purpoſe. The following citations from him will be ſufficient to make good our aſſertion. Nothing is hated of God; no, nor any thing of the Word †: For *both are one, namely God.* In another place, he obſerves, that "‡ the God of the univerſe, is one only; good, juſt, creator, " the Son in the Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Here the Son in the Father (or with the Father) is ſtyl'd the one God, and God of the univerſe: Words too plain to need a comment; nor can we well conceive any thing more expreſs, except what follows be allow'd ſo, being part of a prayer where he addreſſes himſelf to both Father and Son jointly as to one Lord, in the ſingular number; ** *Son and Father, both one, Lord.* The whole prayer is very remarkable, and as clear an acknowledgment of the holy and undivided Trinity, as one would expect to meet with in the fathers of the fourth century, or the ages following.

HERE the patrons of the Arian ſcheme have nothing left but to charge the author with Sabellianiſm; a word, which they are uſed to employ in this controverſy ſo ordinarily, almoſt againſt every thing they do not approve; or which is too ſtrong, and too expreſſive, to admit of any tolerable evaſion. Yet it happens with this excellent writer, as it has with moſt who have kept in the middle way: He has ſeveral paſſages ſo full and clear for the diſtinction of Perſons, that he has been thought by ſome to lean too far towards the other extreme, and almoſt to border upon Arianiſm ††. Which, tho' it be as falſe a charge as the former;

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* Adv. Prax. ſ. 13. p. 507.

† Ἓν γὰρ ἄμφω, ὁ Θεός. p. 135.

‡ Τῶν συμπάντων Θεὸν ἕνα μόνον εἶναι, ἀγαθὸν, δίκαιον, δημιουργὸν υἱὸν ἐν πατρὶ ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων. Clem. Alex. Pæd. l. 1. c. 8. p. 142.

** Υἱὲ καὶ Πατὴρ, ἓν ἄμφω, Κύριε. Pæd. l. 3. c. 12. p. 311.

†† P. 699, 769.

yet may ſerve, however, to ſhew, (which is the only uſe I would at preſent make of it) that this father was no Sabellian. When an author ſometimes ſeems to incline too much one way, and ſometimes to be carry'd too far the other way; it is a reaſonable preſumption, that he is not, in truth, inclin'd to take either way; but to keep between the extremes. The beſt rule of interpreting ſuch an author, is to compare his ſeveral expreſſions and ſentiments together; and then common juſtice will require, eſpecially if he were a perſon, not only of good ſenſe, but of great learning, as well as probity, to believe, that he had ſome conſiſtent meaning; and did not deſign to ſay, and unſay; or to fill his writings with flagrant and notorious contradictions.

Our next authority ſhall be the famous and learned *Origen*. In anſwer to *Celſus*, who had charged the chriſtians with worſhipping more Gods than one; he refers * to that text of St. *John, I and my Father are one* †; and, after ſome explication of the meaning, that it might not be interpreted to a Sabellian ſenſe, he adds, ‡ *We therefore, in the ſenſe I have told you, worſhip but one God, the Father and Son.* In another place he ſays of the Son, that ** *he is one and the ſame God and Lord with the Father.* In his comment on the epiſtle to the *Romans*, he ſays of Father and Son, that †† *They are both one God; becauſe the Son has no other fountain of his divinity, but the Father; being (according to what wiſdom ſays of him) a moſt pure emanation from the one fountain, the Father.* It were eaſy to vindicate any one of the three citations, as to the manner of expreſſion, from the charge of novelty. But the laſt is clear and full for the eſſential or ſubſtantial unity. There is no reaſonable doubt to be made, but that the two former ought to be interpreted to the ſame ſenſe with it; if it be conſider'd what juſt and worthy ſentiments *Origen* has elſewhere expreſs'd of the Son of God: That he is ‡‡ properly Son of God: Son, by * nature, and not by adoption: Eternal †: Eternally generated ‡: Uncreated **: Creator ††: God by nature; the power and wiſdom of God; frequently ‡‡: Conſubſtantial *: Omnipreſent †: Immutable ‡: Incomprehenſible **.

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* P. 385. † *John* 10. 30.

‡ Ἕνα οὖν Θεὸν, ὡς ἀποδεδώκαμεν, τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱὸν θεραπεύομεν. Contr. Celſ. p. 386.

** *Unus atque idem eſt cum Patre Deus & Dominus.* De Princ. l. 1. c. 2. p. 772. Edit. Baſil.

†† *Unus autem uterque eſt Deus, quia non eſt aliud Filio divinitatis initium quàm Pater; ſed ipſius unius Paterni fontis (ſicut ſapientia dicit) puriſſima eſt emanatio Filius.* p. 467. Vol. 2. Edit. Baſil.

‡‡ Contr. Celſ. p. 52. * Pamph. Apol. p. 122. † Athanaſ. vol. 1. p. 233.
‡ Huet. Orig. vol. 2. p. 31. ** Contr. Celſ. p. 287. †† Ibid. p. 63, 317.
‡‡ Ibid. p. 171. * Athanaſ. vol. 1. p. 233. † Contr. Celſ. p. 63, 164, 239.
‡ Ibid. p. 169, 170. ** Ibid. p. 320.

I might have produc'd ſeveral other teſtimonies to the ſame purpoſe; but theſe are ſufficient to ſhew, that to ſtyle the three Perſons, or the whole Trinity, one God, was no new form of expreſſion begun by *Athanaſius* in the fourth century, but what had been conſtantly us'd by the catholick writers of the greateſt learning and character long before. And it is a ſtrong preſumption, that thoſe, who diſcover ſo great an averſion to the language of the ante-nicene fathers, are far from agreeing with them in doctrines; and are very ſenſible of their diſagreement. Suppoſing, however, that the manner of expreſſion had been new, and firſt introduc'd about the time of the council of *Nice*, which manifeſtly it was not; yet what will ſuch a conceſſion ſignify, if we are able to prove, that they all taught the ſame doctrine, even where they do not follow one particular form of expreſſion? If they teach it, tho' but indirectly or conſequentially, they do it as certainly; and it amounts, upon the whole matter, to the ſame thing, and is equally ſerviceable to the cauſe of the orthodox. For inſtance:

1. The ancients, in general, unanimouſly maintain'd againſt heathens and hereticks, that there is but one God in the ſtrict ſenſe. And the ſame ancients affirm'd the Son to be God in the ſtrict ſenſe; and the Holy Ghoſt to be God likewiſe; ſome, in * expreſs terms; others, in words equivalent; from whence it evidently follows, that they look'd upon the three Perſons as one God.

2. The ancients, in general, unanimouſly aſſerted a co-eſſential and co-eternal Trinity, either directly and expreſſly, or implicitly and conſequentially; which, in effect, is to teach, that the Trinity is the one God.

3. The titles and attributes aſcrib'd to the Son expreſſly and frequently, (and ſometimes, tho' not ſo often, to the Holy Ghoſt; but always underſtood and implied) are demonſtrative proofs that all the three Perſons are ſuppos'd to be comprehended in the idea of the one God.

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* Tertull. contr. Prax. c. 13. Origen. in Baſil. de Sp. S. p. 219. Cyprian. Ep. ad Jubai. p. 203. Dionyſ. Alex. Labbe. tom. 1. p. 873. *Sabellius*'s taunting queſtion to the Catholicks; Ἕνα Θεὸν ἔχομεν ἢ τρεῖς Θεούς. Epiphan. Hær. 62. ſhews, that the title of God, as apply'd to the Holy Ghoſt, was the common language of the church, at that time. And the argument may be carry'd up much higher from this conſideration, that the Praxeans and Noëtians made the three Perſons of the Godhead, one Perſon. Wherefore they are much to blame, who, merely upon the credit of *Eraſmus*, perſiſt in ſo notorious an untruth, as that *the Holy Ghoſt was not ſtyl'd God within the three firſt Centuries*: Which, if it were true, as it is manifeſtly falſe, yet would not at all affect the cauſe of the orthodox, the divinity of the Holy Ghoſt being clearly acknowledg'd, even by thoſe that did not give him the title of God in their writings.

To mention only ſuch as are ordinarily apply'd to the Son, by the ante-nicene writers. He is ſtyl'd God by all in general; God and Lord by many of them; Lord God abſolutely by ſeveral; particularly by *Juſtin Martyr*, and *Irenæus*, in the application of texts of the Old Teſtament: True, or truly God by moſt of them; great God by ſome, and perfect God: God by nature; Son by nature; true and proper Son; by many: God of the *Jews*, of *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, very frequently: Sometimes, the only God, and the living God, and counſellor to the Father: Creator of men, of angels, and of all things, conſtantly by all the ancients. As to his attributes, he is repreſented uncreated, eternal, conſubſtantial, either expreſſly, or in effect, by the concurrent teſtimony of the ante-nicene writers. Omnipreſent, omniſcient, omnipotent, immutable, incomprehenſible, impaſſible; *&c.* by ſeveral. In ſhort, every thing is attributed to him that can tend to raiſe our ideas of his dignity, and to denote a Perſon ſtrictly and eſſentially divine.

4. THE worſhip, hymns, doxologies addreſs'd to the three Perſons, as old as chriſtianity itſelf, and as unanimouſly and conſtantly adhered to, are all ſo many proofs of the truth of what we aſſert, that the bleſſed three, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, were the God of the primitive Chriſtians. And it deſerves to be conſider'd, what reproach and ignominy they were all along expos'd to from Jews and Pagans for their worſhipping a man, a crucify'd and mortal man. Yet they never deny'd the charge, but vindicated their practice; ſtrenuouſly aſſerting, that they ought to worſhip that crucify'd man, becauſe God and man; and this at the ſame time that they expreſſly charg'd the heathens with polytheiſm and idolatry, for giving worſhip to any thing or being, beſides the one ſupreme God. What can all this mean? Should not they at leaſt have ſaid, that the worſhip paid to the Son was only honour and reſpect; and that the Father alone had a juſt title to religious worſhip? Or ſhould not they have declar'd plainly, that he was only metaphorically call'd God, or God in a more large and improper ſenſe; ſhould they not have been moderate and tender of giving offence to Jews and Pagans, as ſome pretend we ought to be now, with reſpect to Jews, Infidels, and Mahometans? No: they had not ſo learned Chriſt. His divinity (and the ſame is true of the Holy Ghoſt) was a ſettled point, an article of faith with them; and they perſiſted in their practice, and their defence of it, as reſolutely, as for the truth of chriſtianity itſelf. I ſhall refer the reader to two or three paſſages of *Arnobius* to this purpoſe; and which may ſerve for a ſpecimen of the courage and

conſtancy of the firſt chriſtians, in maintaining the truth, whatever inſults they were expos'd to from their enemies *.

AND yet this is the ſame *Arnobius*, that tells us over and over in his books; that there is but one God; that nothing is God that is not uncreated and eternal; and that the heathen gods were no gods, becauſe they once began to exiſt, and were produc'd in time. What I have obſerv'd of this author, is equally true of all the ancient apologiſts; and we may now conclude, either that the doctrine of three Perſons in one God, is fix'd and radicated in the conſtitution of chriſtianity itſelf; or that the whole army of martyrs and confeſſors; the whole church of Chriſt, as early as the days of inſpiration, were the moſt inconſiderate, raſh, and inconſiſtent men that ever lived, or committed their thoughts to writing; men, who did nothing but contradict and confound themſelves; who impos'd both upon the Jews and Heathens, and, inſtead of promoting, hindred their converſion; who labour'd earneſtly to root up heathen idolatry, and when they had done, planted chriſtian idolatry in its room, and by ſuch reaſons and arguments, as were equally forcible and concluſive againſt both heathens and chriſtians.

THERE is no inſtance, we grant, in nature, ſufficient to illuſtrate the unity, and diſtinction of the three Perſons of the holy and undivided Trinity. Three Suns exactly of the ſame kind would be ſpecifically one. But the unity of the three Perſons is not ſuch. The rays of the ſame Sun, is an inſtance which the fathers apply'd, as more expreſſive, and more pertinent than the former. And as the Sun, with his undivided rays, is one individual Sun; ſo the Father, with the other two Perſons proceeding from him, and inſeparably exiſting with him, and in him, is one individual ſubſtance, one God. Another may have the very ſame notion, and yet think this ſhould not be call'd individual, leſt it might ſeem to infer perſonal identity. This is nothing but cavilling about words. If any do not like the phraſe of individual ſubſtance, they may put undivided ſubſtance in the place of it. While we are agreed, that there is one head, the Father; and that the Son and Holy Ghoſt are two real Perſons, eternally deriv'd from him, exiſting in him, and inſeparably, and ſubſtantially united

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* *Ergone inquiet aliquis furens, iratus, & percitus Deus ille eſt Chriſtus? Deus, reſpondebimus, & interiorum potentiarum Deus.* p. 24. And in another place; *Derideatis licèt ex more, atque in laſciviam diſſolvamini cachinnorum. Deus ille ſublimis fuit, Deus radice ab intimâ, Deus ab incognitis regnis.* p. 32. And in another place; *Cùm verò Deus ſit,* re certâ & *ſine ullius redubitationis ambiguo; inficiaturos arbitramini nos eſſe, quàm maximè illum à nobis coli, & præſidem corporis noſtri nuncupari?* p. 24.

ted to him; this is all that we are concern'd to know. Such as have abundance of leiſure, may diſpute as long as they pleaſe, whether this union ſhall be call'd ſpecifick or individual. The difficulty is not in the thing; but in defining preciſely what is ſpecifick, or what numerical. Let but any man define the words; and it will be as eaſy to determine, whether the unity of the three Perſons be ſpecifick or individual, as it will be to determine, whether they are modes and attributes only, or real Perſons; which can admit of no difficulty, among any that know how to diſtinguiſh between the ſound and the ſenſe of words *.

THE ſum then of what has been ſaid, is this. In the creed we profeſs to believe one God, the Perſon of the Father; one, not excluding the two other Perſons (in the Jewiſh, Sabellian, Arian, or Socinian ſenſe) from partaking of the ſame divine nature, or ſubſtance with him; but excluding all other firſt principles; all pretence to any ſeperate and co-ordinate God; all Perſons or things whatever, except what is ſo contain'd in him, deriv'd from him, and united to him, as to be ſubſtantially and eſſentially one with him.

THIS is the ſenſe of the Apoſtle's creed, and of the Nicene creed, and not contradicted by the Athanaſian, but neceſſarily imply'd. This is the ſenſe of the ancient creeds of the whole Chriſtian church from the beginning, convey'd to us by as clear a tradition, as the books of ſcripture themſelves; the ſenſe which has prevail'd againſt all poſſible oppoſition from Pagans, Jews, and Hereticks; and will prevail while the church ſtands, and to the end of the world. It has been obſcur'd indeed ſometimes, but never loſt, not in the darkeſt times of Popery; it was embrac'd by all the churches of the Reformation, and it is ſtill, bleſſed be God, almoſt univerſally eſtabliſh'd and taught in them.

The Liturgy of the church of *England*, in conformity to the ancient Liturgies, conſiders the Father as the head of all; the Son under the character of mediator; and the Holy Ghoſt, as ſanctifier. Prayers are addreſs'd to God the Father principally, as they ought to be; and ſometimes to each Perſon ſingly, or to all together. Here is nothing but what conſiſts with the primitive doctrine and practice of the faithful, and what tends to keep up a religious ſenſe, as of the co-eternity, and co-equality of the three Perſons together; ſo of the diſtinct perſonality, order, and office of each.

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* This is all the meaning of the modal diſtinction or difference, and is not oppos'd to real, as if they were not three real Perſons; but only to real, as it might ſignify a real diſparity of nature, or different kind of ſubſtance. The Perſons are really diſtinct; but have all the ſame nature, powers, perfections, *&c.* that there's no imaginable difference left, but their different manner of exiſting. Thus *Adam* and *Seth* had equally the ſame human nature, and every thing eſſential to man: But one exiſted without a father, the other from a father; and ſo they differ'd in their manner of exiſtence. Tho' the ſimilitude will not hold in every reſpect, nor indeed will any we can think of.

CHAP. III.

I believe in God the Father Almighty.

THE word * which we tranſlate Almighty, ſignifies both ſupremacy and power; and carries more ideas in it, than can be fully expreſs'd in any one word in our language. It is a title emphatically and eminently aſcrib'd to the Father in the ancient creeds; and even in the Athanaſian creed itſelf. In ſpeaking to it, I ſhall take occaſion to ſay ſomething of the Father's diſtinguiſhing titles and appellations; a matter, which, becauſe of the ſtreſs generally laid upon it in the controverſy about the Trinity, deſerves to be particularly conſider'd. The Arians and Socinians have thought it of great importance to their cauſe, to be able to find any particular title or epithet, that has been conſtantly apply'd to the Father only; imagining, that the titles intended to denote the firſt Perſon particularly of the ever-bleſſed Trinity, the head and fountain of all, were deſign'd to ſignify, that the other two Perſons are not co-eternal and conſubſtantial with him: Whereas, on the contrary, it may much more reaſonably be inferr'd, that ſince the titles and appellations proper to diſtinguiſh the nature of God from all other things; ſuch as God, true God, the eternal and immutable being, or the like, are not ſufficient to diſtinguiſh between one perſon and another; but other titles denoting ſome peculiar acts, or offices, or the ſame titles, with the addition of an article, or ſome particular emphaſis, muſt be uſed for this purpoſe; I ſay, it may be much more reaſonably inferr'd from hence, that there is no difference of nature between one and the other, but only a diſtinction of Perſons. And yet what would it argue, admitting that any ſuch titles were conſtantly appropriated to God the Father, which they are not; but that the nature of the three Perſons is ſo entirely the ſame, that it is hard to find words, which ſhall ſerve to diſcriminate one Perſon from another; and to expreſs what Perſon we diſtinctly mean.

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* Παντοκρατωρ.

Or, ſuppoſe that ſome particular titles and epithets have, by ſcripture and antiquity, been apply'd peculiarly to the Father, ſo long as words of a like import, if not of the very ſame, are apply'd to the other Perſons likewiſe, what does this prove, but that the Perſons have been diſtinguiſh'd, as it were, by proper names; and that, as ſeveral words may ſerve to denominate the Son, or the Holy Ghoſt; ſo likewiſe others may ſtand inſtead of the title of God the Father, and mean no more than the firſt Perſon of the ever bleſſed Trinity, not differing in nature, but in the manner of ſubſiſting, from either of the other two. The title of Father, for any thing that appears, may as well be inſiſted on, to ground a difference of nature upon, as any of the reſt. For it will be difficult for any man to ſhew, that the other titles, as aſcrib'd to him by way of eminence, or by way of contradiſtinction, mean any thing more than that he is primarily, and originally, not excluſively or ſolely, what theſe titles or appellations denote. Had ſeveral titles then been as conſtantly aſcribed to the Father, as is pretended, and to him only; yet the Arians and Socinians would be as much at a loſs for a proof of what they deſign, as ever. But it happens a little unfortunately to theſe gentlemen, that, with all their painful reſearches into antiquity, they have hardly been able to meet with any one title or epithet apply'd to the Father, which has not, upon ſome occaſion or other, been apply'd by the ancients to the Son too. Who, remembring * the texts of ſcripture; *I and my Father are one*; *all that the Father has is mine*; who is the expreſs *image of his Perſon*, and the like, ſcrupled not ſometimes to apply to the Son thoſe very titles and epithets, which they ordinarily and generally reſerved to the Father.

TERTULLIAN is not only an evidence for the fact; but he pleads the caſe, and juſtifies it from the reaſon of the thing. "The "titles, ſays he, belonging to the Father, are, God Almighty, "the Higheſt, the Lord of Hoſts, the King of *Iſrael*, he † *Who* "*is*, as the ſcriptures teach. Theſe, we ſay, belong'd to the "Son likewiſe. In theſe characters he came, and acted all along; "in his own Perſon proving to mankind that he was inveſted "with them. *All things*, ſays he, *that the Father hath are mine.* "And why not then his titles? This he urges againſt *Praxeas*, who pretended that theſe ſeveral names belong'd to one Perſon ſolely: Wherefore *Tertullian* goes on to ſhew, that they belong'd

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* Vid. Tertul. cont. Prax. c. 17.

† ὁ ὤν.

to the Son alſo, as a diſtinct Perſon from the Father. "Conſi-
"der, ſays he, when you read of God Almighty, the Higheſt,
"and Lord of Hoſts, and King of *Iſrael*, and Who is, whether
"the Son may not be meant by theſe names; he being God Al-
"mighty, in his own right, (or own Perſon) as the Word of God
"Almighty, and as receiving dominion over all; the Higheſt, as
"being exalted to the right hand of God, as St. *Peter* tells us in
"the *Acts*; Lord of Hoſts, as all things are put under him;
"King of *Iſrael*, as that nation was his peculiar people; and al-
"ſo Who is, becauſe many are called Sons, and are not properly
"ſuch. *Praxeas* had argued againſt the Catholicks, that the eighth verſe of the firſt chapter of the *Apocalypſe*, where the Lord is called * Almighty, could not be meant of the Son, as a diſtinct Perſon from the Father; becauſe nothing really diſtinct from the Father can be † Almighty. Since therefore that text is undoubtedly meant of the Perſon called the Son, mention'd in the verſe before, and yet not of any real diſtinct Perſon, it muſt follow, that Father and Son are not diſtinct Perſons, but one and the ſame Perſon.

THIS I take to have been *Praxeas*'s argument: And I the rather mention it, that it may be obſerv'd this verſe was at that time underſtood by all ſides of God the Son. *Praxeas* took it for granted; and *Tertullian* himſelf durſt not deny it, however he might have got rid of a ſpecious objection, as it was thought, by denying it. But he anſwers, by telling him, that the Son is really Almighty ‡, in as much as *the Son of the Almighty, is as truly Almighty; as the Son of God, is God.* The ſame, or the like anſwer, (probably to the ſame objection) we meet with in *Hippolytus*, in his treatiſe againſt *Noëtius* **. And *Origen* †† interprets the text of the Son, as they do, and draws the like inference from it. So that the title of Almighty was frequently apply'd to the Son, as well as to the Father. We find it thus apply'd in *Clement* ‡‡ of *Alexandria* twice or thrice; and even in *Euſebius* * himſelf, how ever ſtrenuous an aſſertor of the prerogative of the Father. This therefore we may take for a certain rule in interpreting the writings of all the catholick fathers. There's no name or title (excepting what expreſſes merely a perſonal relation, as the name of Father) apply'd to the Father, but what they thought properly applicable to the Son too, as well as the thing, power, or property, ſignify'd by that name: Only it was primarily applicable to one, and ſecondarily to the other. Both were conceived to have all the ſame perfections and powers, and in the ſame degree, allowing only for the different manner of ſubſiſtence, as one is God of himſelf, the other God of God. It is in vain therefore to endeavour at any argument from the Father's diſtinguiſhing titles, which were never diſtinguiſhing in any other ſenſe, but as denoting the Father to be the firſt Perſon; from whom the other two Perſons proceed, co-eternal, and co-equal with him: Which amounts to no more, than if it were ſaid, the Father only is Father, or that he only is the firſt Perſon.

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* Παντοκράτωρ † Παντοκράτωρ ‡ Παντοκράτωρ ** P. 238.
†† De Princ. l. 1. c. 2. ‡‡ P. 148, 277, 647. * Demonſtr. ev. l. 6. c. 16.

I might confirm what is here ſaid by obſerving particularly that the title of * God over all, generally reſerv'd to the Father, yet is apply'd to the Son too, by all the ante-nicene fathers, as well as the poſt-nicene, in their interpretation of the ninth chapter of the *Romans*, and the fifth verſe; but ſtill, God of God. So for † maker of all things; it is another diſtinguiſhing title of the Father; but how? Only as he is primarily ſo, being the Father, or firſt Perſon. Otherwiſe, in the fulleſt ſignification of it, it is as properly applicable to God the Son, and is ſo apply'd expreſly by *Irenæus* ‡ twice; and in words equivalent by all the fathers.

THE Father then had always ſome peculiar title generally reſerved to him; and the Son and Holy Ghoſt reſpectively had theirs too, to diſtinguiſh their Perſons, and that it might be underſtood which Perſon particularly was intended, or ſpoken of. But as to any difference of nature, or ſubſtance, as it was what the good fathers never ſuppos'd, ſo they never deſign'd any thing like it by thoſe diſtinguiſhing appellations. The title therefore of ** Almighty in the creed; whether denoting the power or ſupremacy of God, is not to be apply'd to the Perſon of the Father only; ſo as to exclude either of the other Perſons from being, in a proper ſenſe, all which this name, or title ſignifies: Only it belongs to the Father primarily, and to the other two Perſons derivatively. And they are all three, one Almighty, in the ſame ſenſe or reſpect, as they are one Subſtance, or one God. The attributes are as really one, as the ſubſtance is; and as really diſtinct, as the Perſons are. And as there is but one Almighty Subſtance; ſo, it muſt be own'd; there are three Almighty Perſons.

I am ſenſible that the word render'd Almighty in the Athanaſian creed ††, is not the ſame with what is here render'd Almighty, nor of the ſame latitude and extent. But the difference being only this, that one of the terms expreſſes more attributes, or powers, than the other; and the reaſon being the ſame for one, or for many, a greater critical exactneſs, in the application of them, was not neceſſary.

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* Ἐπὶ πάντων Θεός.

† Ποιητὴς τῶν πάντων, or τῶν ὅλων.

‡ L. 1. p. 44, 79.

** Παντοκράτωρ.

†† Παντοδύναμος.

I have ſhewn, that the title of * Almighty is properly applicable to any of the three Perſons, in reſpect of what it really ſignifies; and ſo the ancient writers apply'd it indifferently to Father or Son. But if any man will be contentious, and make it a ſynonymous term, equivalent to Father, or the firſt Perſon; he may uſe his liberty. For then there will be only a diſpute about the word, whether it ſhall be underſtood in a more reſtrain'd ſenſe, or in its larger ſignification.

AND this is all that I think neceſſary to be ſaid upon the word *Almighty*, as it ſtands in the creed; not deſigning here any other explication of it, than as it relates to the Father, conſider'd as ſuch. As creeds were intended to aſſert the doctrine of the Trinity, and at firſt, very probably, were compiled with that view; ſo when they come to be perverted, and men pretend to draw arguments from them, even againſt that very doctrine which they were deſign'd to eſtabliſh; particular care ſhould be taken to guard againſt ſuch impious attempts; whether undertaken by ignorant pretenders to criticiſm, or men of known diſtinction in the learned world.

CHAP. IV.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

SOME creeds, particularly one in *Irenæus* †, one in *Tertullian* ‡, another in *Origin* **, explain creation by the production of the world out of nothing. In conformity to which, I take it to be the general meaning of the preſent article, that all things beſides, whether viſible or inviſible, whether in heaven or earth, not only owe their formation, but their being and original to the true God. So that there is no pretence, either for making matter eternal, as ſome philoſophers, and ſome hereticks have aſſerted it; or for ſaying, that the world, or any part of it, was created by certain inferior powers, angels, or principalities; nor that any other being coordinate to, or of a diſtinct ſubſtance from God, had bore the leaſt part, either in making or forming the world. God the Father, and he only, was, and is Creator, in oppoſition to all beings before mention'd: But not in oppoſition to, or excluſive of God the Son, or God the Holy Ghoſt, who are one with him in the ſame divine nature and eſſence, and inſeparable from him. Neither of them is excluded from being any thing, or every thing, that the Father is; but only from being ſo originally, and underivatively. Tho' the creation of the world be attributed to the Father, to whom ultimately is referr'd all that the Son is, or does, as to the fountain of all; yet it was ever allow'd [*], that the creation was the more immediate work of God the Son, *by whom all things were made* [†]. *By whom were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, viſible and inviſible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: All things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things conſiſt* [‡]. *By whom God made the worlds* [**]. In conſideration whereof, the moſt ancient creeds, when they mention the creation of the world by God the Father, ſubjoin thereto, by his Son, or his Word [††]. The creeds that omit the mention of it in the firſt article, do all, or moſt of them, inſert it in the third; as, the creed of *Origen*; the *Jeruſalem* creed, that of *Cyrill*; the creed of *Lucian*; that in the apoſtolical conſtitutions; that of *Cæſarea*, left us by *Euſebius*; the *Alexandrian*, as is ſuppoſed by the learned, offered by [‡‡] *Arius* and *Euzoius*; the two creeds of *Epiphanius*; and, to name no more, the nicene creed, which retains the words, *by whom all things are made*; tho' ſo diſadvantagiouſly placed, that an unſkilful reader maynot eaſily diſtinguiſh whether they refer to the Father, or Son. *Gregory Thaumaturgus*, in his creed, expreſſes it very emphatically: [*] *The operating Word, the Wiſdom comprehending the whole ſyſtem of the world, and the Power productive of the whole creation.*

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* Παντοκράτωρ.

† P. 98.

‡ P. 206.

** Pamph. apolog.

How this came to be omitted in the Apoſtle's or the *Roman* creed; which ſeems to have been ſo religiouſly preſerv'd in the other creeds, ſome of them, probably, older than the *Roman*, I pretend not to determine. Whether it were for brevity ſake only, or becauſe it was thought ſufficiently imply'd in the firſt or ſecond article [†]; or becauſe (as is moſt probable) the *Roman* church was leſs infeſted with hereſies, and ſo there was leſs occaſion for laying any great ſtreſs upon this particular form of confeſſion. However, ſcripture and antiquity have conſtantly aſcrib'd the creation of the world to the Son, as well as the Father, and to the Son more immediately, as I have obſerved; and, to confirm what I have ſaid, may refer to *Origen* [*], who ſpeaks the ſenſe of all antiquity, where he tells us, that the Father's part in creating of the world was to iſſue out orders, and the Son's, to execute them; and therefore the Father was primarily, but the Son immediately, creator. And it is in this reſpect chiefly, that the Son is ſo often called by *Irenæus*, *Tertullian*, *Cyprian*, and others, the hand of God, or of the Father; and particularly by *Methodius* [†], the omnipotent, and mighty hand of the Father. By which, and the like expreſſions, as I obſerv'd above, was ſignify'd the conſubſtantiality of the Son with the Father, and their joint operations: Wherefore *Irenæus* interprets the Father's creating by his Word and Wiſdom, to be creating by himſelf, allowing only for the diſtinction of Perſons. The Son particularly is acknowledg'd by all the ancients to be properly Creator [‡].

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[*] See Orig. contr. Celſ. p. 317.

[†] *John* 1. 2.

[‡] *Coloſſ.* 1. 16, 17.

[**] *Heb.* 1. 2.

[††] *Omnia condidit per Verbum ſuum.* Iren. p. 98. And in another place, *Per Chriſtum Jeſum Dei Filium.* p. 178. And *Tertullian*, *Per Verbum ſuum primò omnium demiſſum.* p. 206.

[‡‡] See Socrat. E. H. p. 51.

[*] Λόγος ἐνεργὴς, σοφία τῆς ὅλων συστάσεως περιεκτικὴ, καὶ δύναμις τῆς ὅλης κτίσεως ποιητική. Oper. Greg. Thaumat. p. 1.

[†] This article came late into the creed. *Vid. Pearſon.* p. 47.

TESTIMONIES to this purpoſe are ſo numerous, ſo clear, and ſo inconteſtable, that I may ſave my ſelf the trouble of charging the margin with them. I ſhall cite one paſſage from *Irenæus*, which will ſhew very fully, in what ſenſe the ancients underſtood the creation of the world to belong either to Father, Son, or Holy Ghoſt, and what conſequence they drew from it.

DISPUTING againſt hereticks, who attributed the creation of the world to angels, and powers ſeparate from the one true God, he ſays thus. [**] " Angels did not make us, nor did they form us; " neither was it in their power to make the image of God: None " but the [††] Word could do this; no powers diſtinct from the Fa- " ther of all things: For God did not want their aſſiſtance in " making the things which he had ordain'd. For his Word and " his Wiſdom, the Son and the Holy Ghoſt, are always with him; " by whom, and with whom, he made all things freely, and of his " own accord; to whom alſo he ſpake, in theſe words; *Let us* " *make man in our own image and likeneſs* [‡‡]. To which we may ſubjoin one paſſage more. * "Man is made after the image and "likeneſs of the eternal God; the Father deſigning and iſſuing "out orders; the Son executing them, and making man; the "Holy Ghoſt ſupporting and ſtrengthening him when made.

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[*] Contr. Celſ. p. 317.

[†] Apud Plot. cod. 235.

[‡] Δημιουργὸς, τεχνίτης, κτιστὴς, ποιητὴς, Ἀνθρώπων, Ἀγγέλων, τῶν πάντων, τῶν ὅλων.

[**] *Non ergo angeli fecerunt nos, nec nos plaſmaverunt, nec angeli potuerunt imaginem facere Dei: Nec alius quis præter verbum Domini, nec virtus longè abſiſtens à patre univerſorum. Nec enim indigebat horum Deus, ad faciendum quæ ipſe apud ſe prædefinierat fieri, quaſi ipſe ſuas non haberet manus. Adeſt enim ei ſemper Verbum & Sapientia, Filius & Spiritus, per quos, & in quibus, omnia liberè & spontè fecit; ad quos & loquitur dicens, Faciamus hominem ad imaginem & ſimilitudinem noſtram*, Iren. p. 253.

[††] Λόγος.

[‡‡] *Gen.* 1. 26.

Thus the ancients allotted to every Perſon of the ever bleſſed Trinity their reſpective operations, and offices in the creation of things, to ſignify their intimate union with each other, and their joint operations..

The Son is called †, the Father's counſellor, by ‡ *Hermes*, *Irenæus*, *Clement* of *Alexandria*, *Theophilus* biſhop of *Antioch*, and others: A character which would border upon blaſphemy, if apply'd to any creature.

The pretence therefore of the Arians, that the Son was no more than an inferior inſtrument, a creature which the Father employ'd in his creation of things, was as novel, as it was impious. Beſides that, the abſurdity of ſuppoſing a creature properly Creator, and endow'd with creative powers, which the Arians, upon the evidence of ſcripture and tradition, could not but admit, was alone, like a dead weight about the neck of Arianiſm, ſufficient to ſink it.

I ſhall obſerve farther, that tho' the Son is repreſented by the ancients, as miniſtring to the Father, and executing his will; yet they hereby only intended the ſubordination of the Son, as a Son to the Father; not any inferiority of nature or power. So *Tertullian*, who allows of ſome difference of order, or ** ſuperiority in the former ſenſe, denies it in the latter ††. And *Juſtin Martyr*, who in his dialogue ſtyles the Son ‡‡ Miniſter of the Father in one ſenſe, expreſſly denies that he is ſo in another ſenſe. *Euſebius*, who calls him * a ſubordinate agent in executing the Father's good pleaſure, does, in the ſame ſentence, make him joint creator with the Father; as did alſo *Dionyſius* of *Alexandria* before him, giving him the title of † joint creator with the Father.

Upon the whole then, it appears, that the work of creation is, in an eminent ſenſe, aſcrib'd to the Father; not in oppoſition to the other two Perſons eſſentially one with him; but to all other beings or perſons whatever. And thus we profeſs in the creed, that God the Father emphatically, all the three Perſons ſtrictly and properly, are one creator of heaven and earth, in the ſame ſenſe as they are one God. They wanted not any previous matter to make the world with, nor the aſſiſtance of any thing external, nor was there any ſuch thing: Not any heathen deity, or heretical deity of the Gnoſticks, of *Cerdon*, or *Marcion*; not any angels, or archangels had any hand in creating or forming the univerſe. The one eternal ſupreme Father, with his co-eternal and co-eſſential Word and Spirit, was the ſole Creator and Maker of all things.

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* Τοῦ μὲν Πατρὸς εὐδοκοῦντος καὶ κελεύοντος, τοῦ δὲ υἱοῦ πράσσοντος καὶ δημιουργοῦντος· τοῦ δὲ πνεύματος τρέφοντος καὶ αὔξοντος. p. 285,

† Σύμβουλος τοῦ Θεοῦ.

‡ Herm. ſim. 9. c. 12. Iren. l. 5. p. 292. Clem. p. 769, 832. Theoph. p. 100. Tertull. contr. Hermog. p. 239.

** Apolog. c. 21. adv. Prax. c. 3, 9, 30.

†† *Divinitas gradum non habet, utpote unica.* Adv. Hermog. c. 7.

‡‡ Ὑπηρέτην. Vid. Bull. Def. F. N. p. 258.

* Ὑπουργός, Eccl. Hiſt. l. 1. c. 2.

† Συνδημιουργὸς τῷ Πατρί. Dionyſ. Alex. epiſt. cont. Paul. Samoſat. Labbe. tom. 1. p. 873.

SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

BOOK IV.

Of the Articles of the Chriſtian Faith, as contain'd in the Creed; commonly call'd the Apoſtle's Creed.

ARTICLE II.

And in Jeſus Chriſt his only Son our Lord.

CHAP. I.

And in Jeſus Chriſt.

IN explicating the former article relating to our faith in the firſt Perſon of the holy Trinity, I thought proper to intermix ſeveral things relating to the other two Perſons; which, tho' a fault in ſtrict method, yet was ſerviceable to my deſign, of giving a ſtrict and true account of our chriſtian faith in one God the Father, clear'd from the falſe notions and miſrepreſentations, that former or latter hereſies had introduc'd. Having, I ſay, firſt endeavour'd to ſettle this great point of our belief in one God the Father, upon ſound and catholick principles; I proceed now more directly and eſpecially to conſider what relates to God the Son, here call'd and diſtinguiſh'd by the name of *Jeſus Chriſt*. I muſt not omit to take notice, that many of the ancient greek creeds, as well as the nicene, read one Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, laying a particular emphaſis on the word *one*; either in conformity to an expreſſion of St. *Paul* *, as *Ruffinus* † hath remark'd; or in oppoſition to *Cerinthus* and others; who, in the early times of the church (to avoid the difficulty, as is probable, of confeſſing a God incarnate) divided *Chriſt* from *Jeſus*, making them two different Perſons, inſtead of one *Chriſt Jeſus*. This appears more probable than *Ruffinus* his account; as well from the reaſon of the thing itſelf, as becauſe *Irenæus* in his creed, does not exactly follow St. *Paul*'s expreſſion, but ſays ‡, *one Jeſus Chriſt*, leaving out the term *Lord*; and ſo does *Ignatius* ** before him, on the ſame occaſion. The word *one* is omitted in the *Roman* creed, very probably for the ſame reaſon, which *Ruffinus* gives; namely, that the church of *Rome* was not diſturb'd with hereticks ††, nor had not given origin to hereſies, as the eaſtern parts of the chriſtian world had done. But to proceed, we profeſs in theſe words, that the Perſon known by the name of *Jeſus*, or *Jeſus* of *Nazareth*, was, and is the very *Chriſt*, the promiſed *Meſſiah*. I need not be particular in explaining the etymology of the name *Jeſus*, ſignifying a *Saviour*, and expreſſly declar'd in the holy ſcripture to be given our Lord for that reaſon. What *Jeſus* was, and what he did and ſuffer'd, and in what reſpects he was the Saviour of the world, will more properly be conſider'd in the following parts of the creed. What we are to obſerve at preſent, is, that the very Perſon, whom both Jews and Gentiles, believers and unbelievers, equally acknowledg'd to have appear'd in *Judæa* at ſuch a time, and to have been the author and founder of a new religion; was the anointed of God, and commiſſion'd by him in every thing he ſaid or did. In other words; that he was the very *Chriſt* the *Meſſiah*.

THIS is the fundamental article of the Chriſtian religion, conſider'd properly as ſuch; implicitly containing, or virtually including all the other articles of it. The founder of any religion muſt firſt open his credentials, and be recommended and aſſur'd by them as a teacher ſent from God. When this is done, the rece-

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[*] 1 *Cor.* 8. 6. [†] Expoſit. in Symb. p. 540.

[‡] Ἕνα Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ. p. 48.

[**] Ἕνα Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν τὸν ἀφ' ἑνὸς Πατρὸς προελθόντα, καὶ εἰς ἕνα ὄντα καὶ χωρήσαντα. Ep. ad Magn. c. 7. p. 19. Cot. Ed.

[††] *Quod neque hæreſis ulla illic ſumpſit exordium.* Expoſit. p. 539.

ption of whatever doctrine he teaches, is ſuppos'd to follow of courſe.

Upon the firſt converſion therefore of men to the chriſtian faith, little more was requir'd of them at their baptiſm *, than a ſerious and ſolemn profeſſion, that *Jeſus* was the *Chriſt the Son of God* †; or, as it is expreſs'd with ſomething greater emphaſis by St. *Peter*, *that Chriſt, the Son of the living God* ‡. This was devoting themſelves to the ſervice of *Chriſt*, accepting him for their Ruler and Law-giver, their King and their God; and engaging implicitly to believe every doctrine, and to obey every precept of the goſpel. Such an engagement was then ſufficient to recommend any perſon to chriſtian baptiſm, and, in conſequence of it, to make him a diſciple of Chriſt. I thought it might not be improper to take notice of this by the way, becauſe it has been made matter of diſpute, whether the belief of this one article, that *Jeſus is the Meſſiah*, be ſufficient to conſtitute a perſon a chriſtian. In anſwer to which, it may be obſerved, that a mere aſſent to that propoſition does no more conſtitute a perſon a chriſtian; than the devil's belief of it entitled him to the ſame character. But if by believing that article, be underſtood our receiving *Jeſus* as our Lawgiver and King, and ſubmitting our ſelves to be govern'd by him; this is, in other words, receiving chriſtianity; and, no doubt, a man's receiving chriſtianity, is the ſame thing with his becoming a chriſtian. And it is certainly ſufficient, in order to an admiſſion into the chriſtian ſociety, to acknowledge the founder and ruler of it to be divinely commiſſion'd; to accept him for our Lord and Maſter, with entire reſignation of our faith to his doctrine, and of our practice to his laws.

This was the caſe of the firſt converts, who, being admitted to baptiſm upon their ſolemn profeſſing *Chriſt Jeſus* to be the Son of God, or, what imports the ſame thing, the *Meſſiah*, did thereby, in general, receive chriſtianity, and oblige themſelves to be conformable to the rules of it in every particular. So that an aſſent to that one article, was, in effect, and implicitly, an aſſent to all which that article contain'd, the whole chriſtian religion.

If it be queſtion'd then, whether the explicit belief of that article, with an implicit engagement to all it contains, be ſufficient to qualify any perſon for admiſſion into the chriſtian church, it may be anſwer'd in the affirmative. And ſo to receive the ſcripture as having the ſanction of divine authority, and to accept them as a rule of our faith and practice, may be thought equally ſufficient with this article, as of neceſſity implying it. And thus all the articles of the chriſtian faith may ſummarily be reduc'd to one. But it is really matter of wonder, why any ſhould give themſelves the trouble of laying this down as an uſeful diſcovery, when it really ſignifies very little or nothing. For the queſtion among chriſtians of different perſuaſions, is not, whether the whole of our religion may not be reduc'd to, or ſumm'd up in, that one article, that *Chriſt Jeſus was a teacher ſent from God?* Nor, whether a ſerious and ſolemn acknowledgment thereof, might not have been a qualification ſufficient for chriſtian baptiſm, eſpecially in the primitive times? But, whether this divine teacher, or thoſe commiſſion'd by him, have not deliver'd ſuch or ſuch doctrines, and oblig'd us to believe, or, at leaſt, not to disbelieve them, under pain of damnation? This is the material point; what is ſaid, without any relation to it, is nothing but amuſement.

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* *Acts* 2. 38. † *Acts* 8. 37. ‡ *John* 6. 69.

IT may here be expected, that I ſhould proceed to the proof of this propoſition, that *Jeſus* of *Nazareth* was the *Meſſiah* promis'd to the Jews, inveſted with the ſeveral offices of Prophet, Prieſt, and King. But the conſideration of them more properly falls in with the other parts of the creed. Beſides that, the dignity of his Perſon, antecedent to the œconomy of man's redemption, is what ought to be conſider'd in the firſt place, and what was chiefly deſign'd in the preſent article. It is the conſtant method indeed of all the creeds, firſt to conſider what he was in his divine nature, antecedent to the redemption of mankind, or even to the creation itſelf; and then to proceed to his incarnation, and the proper effects of it. I ſhall therefore decline the proof and conſideration of his being the *Meſſiah* for the preſent, and conſider how the Perſon of *Jeſus Chriſt*, is God's *only Son*, or in what reſpect he is here ſo ſtyl'd.

CHAP. II.

And in Jeſus Chriſt his only Son.

WE need not make a doubt of what is deſign'd by the character of our Saviour in the creed, if we compare but this article with the like expreſſions in other creeds, probably as ancient, or ſome of them more ancient, than this. The *Jeruſalem* creed, in this place, reads the article thus. “ And in one Lord “ *Jeſus Chriſt*, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the

“ Father before all ages, true God, by whom all things were made. *Tertullian* in one of his creeds has it thus. “ The Son of the one God, his Word, that proceeded from him, by whom all things were made, and without whom nothing was made [*]. *Origen*, “ Begotten of the Father before all creatures [†]. *Irenæus*, in one creed, is ſhort upon this article; but he plainly refers the ſonſhip of *Chriſt* to his divine nature, and not to his human nativity. The other creeds, in general, are very full and particular in the article of *Chriſt*'s filiation, antecedent to the creation of the world. So that there can be no reaſonable doubt made, but that the *Roman* creed intended the very ſame ſenſe with the reſt, and only expreſs'd it more briefly for reaſons before mention'd, with reſpect to the greater purity of its faith. Beſides that, the known conſtant ſenſe of the word [‡] only begotten, in eccleſiaſtical antiquity, leaves us no ſhadow of doubt about the ſenſe and meaning of it in the creed. What ground they had for the ſenſe they underſtood it in, will appear preſently; and how unanimouſly they taught the doctrine imply'd by it; and what oppoſition it met with from hereticks of all ſorts, will be ſeen too in the ſequel. That our bleſſed Lord is frequently call'd the Son of God in ſcripture, is well known. It is no leſs evident, that this was one of the titles of the *Meſſias*, in familiar uſe at the time of his appearance. Not that *Chriſt* and the *Son of God* were thought ſynonymous terms, any more than *Chriſt* and *Immanuel*, or *Chriſt* and *Jeſus*: But they were different titles denoting the ſame Perſon, conſider'd under different reſpects [**]. The Jews had learn'd from the ſcriptures [††] of the Old Teſtament, that the title of Son of God belong'd to the *Meſſiah*, tho' perhaps they might not generally underſtand it, according to the true and proper ſenſe, in which the prophets intended it, and ſome of their own doctors had expounded it. And no wonder if the generality of the Jews in the time of our Saviour, who thought of little but a temporal kingdom of the *Meſſias*, might have loſt the true ſublime notion of his being the Son of God.

BUT ſufficient care was taken by our bleſſed Lord himſelf, and his apoſtles after him, to revive and inculcate the true doctrine of his divine filiation in a more exalted ſenſe, than could, or had ever been apply'd to any other Perſon whatever. *John* the *Baptiſt*, our

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[*] P. 501. [†] Pamph. apolog. [‡] Μονογενής.

[**] *Meſſiah* or *Chriſt*, ſignifies *anointed*; and ſo the *Lord's Anointed* had been an uſual phraſe for *King*. The title of *Chriſt* therefore, in common acceptation, denoted his relation to the People as their *King*; the title of *Son of God*, his peculiar relation to God.

[††] *Pſal.* 2. 7, 12.——72. 17.——89. 25, 26. *Prov.* 8. 22, 23, 24.——30. 4. *Iſaiah* 4. 2.——9. 6, 7.

Lord's forerunner, began with proclaiming him to be the Son of God [*]: And that with ſuch circumſtances, and high expreſſions of him, as ſhew'd that he did not mean any common and ordinary relation of a Son. Our bleſſed Lord himſelf, in his diſcourſe with *Nicodemus* [†], magnifies the exceeding great love of God to mankind, in ſending his only begotten Son into the world to ſave it, and intimates the heinous aggravation of their guilt who ſhall reject him, and ſhall not *believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God.* Now why ſo great emphaſis laid upon this appellation, the *only begotten Son?* And why is it ſo highly magnify'd? If not on the account of ſome very extraordinary dignity of his Perſon, not only beyond that of any prophet, but of any angel, or archangel, who had been employ'd before between God and man. Theſe emphatical expreſſions of the *only begotten*, and coming too from our Saviour himſelf, certainly give us an idea of a Perſon ſomething more than a mere man born of a virgin; and the phraſe of his being *ſent into the world*, does at leaſt denote, according to the natural and proper ſenſe of it, that he was the *only begotten*, before he came into the world.

THE next teſtimony we meet with concerning him, is again from *John* the *Baptiſt*; who, if there had been any doubt of what he meant before by the *Son of God*, now ſufficiently explains his meaning. *He that cometh from above, is above all*; and *he that cometh from heaven, is above all* [‡]; ſpeaking of our bleſſed Lord: Whereas, ſpeaking of himſelf, however great a Prophet, and inſpir'd of God, he uſes this humble ſtyle. *He that is of the earth, is earthly, and ſpeaketh of the earth.* He goes on [**] in telling the people how greatly the Father eſteem'd his Son, how ſuper-eminent his dignity was, as having *all things given into his hands*, and the *communication of the ſpirit without meaſure*; and then concludes with promiſing immortality to all that receive the Son, aud denouncing the wrath of God upon thoſe that believe not the Son. We ſee the Son is repeated again and again; and what emphaſis is laid upon this character, which ſurely was not done without a particular deſign. It is pretty remarkable, that tho' our bleſſed Lord ſtudiouſly conceal'd from the Jews his being the *Meſſias*, and would not ſuffer it to be divulg'd, leſt he ſhould give any umbrage to the civil government; or the people might be encourag'd to come by force and make him King [††]; yet he permitted himſelf to be declar'd the *Son of God* publickly, by *John* the *Baptiſt*, and he frequently declar'd himſelf ſo. The reaſon whereof ſeems to be this;

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[*] *John* 1. 34.
[†] Ch. 3. 16, 18.
[‡] Ch. 3. 31.
[**] ℣. 35, 36.
[††] Ch. 6. 15.

that the word *Meſſias* among the Jews had been made equivalent to *King Meſſias*, a temporal Prince, as they underſtood it. But the title of *Son of God* did not directly carry the ſame idea with it; but rather was very proper to correct the falſe notions of a temporal Prince, and to turn their expectations upon a *Meſſiah*, who ſhould ſave them, not from their temporal enemies, but from their worſt and greateſt enemies, their ſins.

WHEN our bleſſed Saviour was accus'd by the Jews * for breaking the ſabbath, he immediately took occaſion from thence, by way of juſtification of what he had done, to declare who he was; telling them, that his father (not their father) wrought on the ſabbath †; and that he had a right to do as his father did. The Jews preſently took offence at his making God his father ‡, in ſuch a ſenſe, as to claim an equal right with him of being Lord of the ſabbath, and of acting in as authoritative a manner as he did; and, had he not been in the Temple at that time, would very probably have immediately attempted to ſtone him, as a blaſphemer, for *making himſelf equal with God*.

OUR bleſſed Lord, who was never ſollicitous to take off, or anſwer the charge of making himſelf God, as we may ſee in another caſe, when the ſame ** charge was brought againſt him for taking upon himſelf to forgive ſins; proceeds to ſhew of what great power, eminency, and authority the Son is ††; that he could not but do as the Father did, being ſo intimately united to him; and that whatever the Father did, the Son did likewiſe, with more expreſſions to the ſame effect; ſtill magnifying the Son, and letting them know, that all men ought *to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father* ‡‡. Theſe are too ſtrong expreſſions to come from any perſon who knew himſelf to be no more than a man, or a mere creature; and even in anſwer to a charge of blaſphemy, for taking too much upon himſelf before. This does not look as if the dignity of this relation to the Father conſiſted only in the immaculate conception; or as if it meant nothing more, than that he was an extraordinary teacher, or embaſſador ſent from God.

THE account which he was pleas'd to give of himſelf afterwards is no leſs remarkable. *All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no one knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any one the Father, ſave the Son* *, &c. What? Did no one know of the immaculate conception? Or, were there none that knew that *Jeſus* was the *Meſſiah?* Certainly ſome higher ſenſe of the word *Son* is here intended. It is much too low a conſtruction which a modern critic [*] here gives: *None but the Father knows what the Son ſhall do and ſuffer.* Why ſhould that be call'd knowing the Son? Or, what reference has it to the great power and dignity conferr'd upon him before mention'd? *All things are deliver'd unto me.* The plain meaning is; that Father and Son, by reaſon of their ineffable relation, and intimate union, know each other perfectly; and that the ſureſt way to know the Father, as far as we are capable of ſuch a knowledge, is to apply to the Son for it; that *only begotten Son, which is in the boſom of the Father, and hath declared him* [†]. We find, not long after, that the devils knew him to be the *Son of the moſt high God* [‡], and reverenc'd him accordingly, and ſeem to have had much higher, and more worthy thoughts of the dignity of his Perſon, than our modern Unitarians.

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* *John* 5. 16. † ℣. 17. ‡ ℣. 18. ** *Matt.* 9. 2, 3. *Mark* 2. 5, 6, 7. *Luke* 5. 20, 21. †† *John* 5. 19. ‡‡ ℣. 23. * *Matt.* 11. 27. *Luke* 10. 22.

UPON our Lord's calming a violent tempeſt on the ſea, the people in the ſhip came and paid him worſhip, ſaying, *Of a truth* [**], *thou art the Son of God* [††]. Here certainly their notion of him was rais'd ſomething higher than the common notion of *King Meſſias:* And if they meant by *Son of God, Meſſias,* they underſtood *Meſſias* to be ſomething more than a Perſon ſent from God, becauſe they worſhipp'd him. We never find that the apoſtles accepted worſhip, on account of the miracles done by them [‡‡]; but refus'd it when offer'd, with the utmoſt deteſtation; referring all worſhip to the *living God* [*], and him only. 'Tis ſtrange that our bleſſed Lord, who was all meekneſs and humility, ſhould not have been more reſign'd in this particular, had he been any thing leſs than the eternal Son of God. After this, we find him telling the Jews, that *no man hath ſeen the Father, ſave he which is of God* [†]; which is to the ſame purpoſe with the paſſage before cited from St. *Matthew*; and ſhews, that to be the *Son of God,* means not only to be commiſſion'd from God, but to be of heavenly extraction, as the context of this chapter proves; and not only that, but to be from God, in a ſenſe peculiar to the Perſon of *Chriſt.* [‡] He who is from the Father, in a very emphatical ſenſe; [**] he, and only he, *hath* properly *ſeen the Father,* or known him perfectly. Soon after follows St. *Peter's* noble confeſſion, in the name of the other diſciples, with himſelf.

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[*] Le Clerc Harmon. 136. [†] *John* 1. 18. [‡] *Mark* 5. 7, 9. *Luke* 8. 28. [**] Ἀληθῶς. [††] *Matt.* 14. 33. [‡‡] *Acts* 14. 14, 15. [*] Ch. 10. 26, 27. [†] *John* 6. 46. [‡] Ὁ ὢν παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ. [**] Οὗτος ἑώρακε.

We believe, and are aſſur'd, that thou art the Chriſt, the Son of the living God[*]: Which ſhews that he underſtood what our Lord had been talking of, and therefore was not content to ſay he was the *Chriſt* only, but with the addition of this peculiar and tranſcendent title, *the Son of the living God*, in the ſenſe that our Lord himſelf had intimated to them. He reproves him [†] indeed, for anſwering ſo indiſtinctly for them all, knowing the treachery of *Judas* his heart; but finds no other fault with him.

OUR LORD, as uſual, forbids the diſciples to publiſh that he was the *Chriſt*, or *Meſſiah*[‡], becauſe the generality would take it in a wrong ſenſe, interpreting it of *King Meſſiah*, according to the current prejudice of that time. But we no where find that he lays any reſtraint upon them from publiſhing him to be the *Son of God*: Which, tho' it imply'd the other article; yet becauſe it was apt to lead men's thoughts off from the notion of a temporal Prince, was not generally underſtood in the true ſenſe of it.

THE next remarkable atteſtation to the divine Sonſhip of our bleſſed Saviour, was the voice from heaven at his transfiguration; *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed: Hear ye him*[**].

THIS was declaring him to be the *Son of God* in ſuch a ſublime and peculiar ſenſe, as could belong to no other Perſon, and muſt relate to the dignity of his own Perſon, and not to the condition he was in as man, being then in his ſtate of humiliation, not yet exalted, according to the Socinian hypotheſis, to be the heir of all things; not being yet made our Ruler and Lord, our King and our God.

THE next remarkable paſſage which occurs to our purpoſe, is on occaſion of the tribute money demanded of our Lord for the uſe of the Temple; a duty exacted in the name of God, and for the ſpecial ſervice of the place of his worſhip. Upon this, our bleſſed Lord again takes the opportunity of intimating his peculiar relation to the Father. *What*, ſays he to *Peter*, *do the kings of the earth take tribute of their ſons*[††]? *Peter* anſwering in the negative, our Lord infers, that he might plead the like exemption from paying tribute to God, being the Son of God. But however, that he might give no offence, he chuſes to wave his privilege, and to pay tribute, tho' at the expence of a miracle. Let any man ſeriouſly conſider this, and think, whether it be conſiſtent with the regard we owe to the wiſdom or humility of our bleſſed Saviour, to imagine, that he ſhould ſo much inſiſt upon his own dignity as a

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[*] *John* 6. 69. [†] ỽ. 70. [‡] *Mat.* 16. 20. [**] Ch. 17. 5. *Luke* 9. 35. [††] *Mat.* 17. 23, 24, 25.

Son, were it founded only on his immaculate conception, or his adoption? Or any other relation to the Father, which was not to be underſtood in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe.

After this, our bleſſed Lord cures a blind man [*]; who was thereupon called before the Sanhedrim, and excommunicated, for the reverence and ſenſe of gratitude which he ſhew'd towards his great benefactor. Our Lord, meeting him ſoon after, asks him if he believes *on the Son of God* [†], declaring himſelf to be the Perſon. The man anſwers, *Lord, I believe*; and, falling down at his feet, adores him. Here again, we ſee what title it was that our Lord moſt inſiſted on, and what regard was due to him on that account. Certainly this was underſtood in a much higher ſenſe, than that of a man miraculouſly conceiv'd; or of a mere adopted Son.

Another time, as our Lord was walking in the Temple, the Jews came to circumvent him, asking him if he was the *Meſſiah*. He, knowing their deſign and malice, did not think fit to anſwer them directly [‡]; but appeals to his miracles; and tells them moreover expreſſly, that God was his Father, and that *he and his Father were one* [**]. The Jews immediately charge him with blaſphemy, for *making himſelf God*, and prepare to ſtone him. Our bleſſed Lord, in his own vindication, does not tell them that he is not God, or that he does not make himſelf God; a method, which one would think he would have taken, had it been conſiſtent with truth and juſtice, in order to take off ſo ſevere a charge as that of blaſphemy. But he makes them two anſwers, which, inſtead of removing, rather confirm'd their ſuſpicion, and provok'd them ſtill more [††]. They are to this effect; as if he had ſaid; If ſome of your own Sanhedrim or Judges, who have no more than a remote and imperfect reſemblance of divine Majeſty, in reſpect of their office, are called Gods in holy ſcripture [‡‡]; ſhall one, who has a proper right and title to that name; one, whom the Father (having had him with him all along) hath ſanctified, and *ſent into the world* [*], be charg'd with blaſphemy, for ſtyling himſelf the *Son of God*; a title, which he has a ſtrict and natural right to? Yet if you will not believe my words, at leaſt *believe the works* that I do; being manifeſtly the *works of my Father* [†]; ſo that you may eaſily judge from my [‡] doing the ſame things that the Father doth, and from the unity of power and operation, that we *are* both *one*, and *the Father in me, and I in*

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[*] *John* 9. 7.

[†] ℣. 35, 36, &c.

[‡] Ch. 10. 24.

[**] ℣. 30.

[††] ℣. 34.

[‡‡] *Pſal.* 82. 6.

[*] *John* 10. 36.

[†] ℣. 37.

[‡] See *John* 5. 18.

him. The Jews were ſo enrag'd at this *; perceiving how, inſtead of clearing himſelf of what they call'd blaſphemy, he had the more ſtrongly aſſerted his divine generation, that they again would have laid hold of him to draw him out of the temple, with an intention to ſtone him.

We may next obſerve *Martha*'s confeſſion †, that our Saviour was the *Chriſt*; but with this addition or explication; *The Son of God, that was to come into the world.* We may take notice how, all along, this title of *Son of God*, was united with the title of *Chriſt*, in the perſon of our bleſſed Saviour; which, tho' not generally underſtood, or not ſufficiently conſider'd, was not without ſome wiſe and ſpecial reaſon. And it ſeems to have been the particular concern of our bleſſed Lord to open and explain the deſign of it by degrees; and to raiſe the thoughts of the jewiſh nation above the expectation of a mere temporal King, to a juſt idea of the *Son of God*, whoſe nature was truly divine, and whoſe kingdom properly ſpiritual. When the Phariſees came about him, he preſently put a queſtion to them, which diſcover'd their weakneſs, and ſhewed wherein principally thoſe men were loſt and infatuated, in reſpect of their notions of the *Meſſiah*.

He asks them, how the *Meſſiah* could be both *David's Son, and David's Lord* ‡? The men were ſo ſurprized at this queſtion, that they had nothing to reply. They knew not the diſtinction between the human and divine nature of the *Meſſiah*. There it was that our bleſſed Lord found them defective; and his putting the queſtion to them in that manner, carries in it the force of a very ſolemn rebuke, for their being at once ſo ignorant, and ſo aſſuming.

As he had before diſcover'd the great perverſeneſs and diſingenuity of the Chief Prieſts and Scribes **, by a ſtrong interrogation, relating to *John* the *Baptiſt*; ſo, by this ſecond queſtion, he expoſes the blindneſs of the Phariſees, and tacitly reproves them for their low and unworthy thoughts of the *Meſſiah* whom they expected.

Whoever carefully conſiders the nature and tendency of our Saviour's diſcourſes, excepting thoſe which related to morality, will find them, for the moſt part, tending to this one point; that there is another Perſon, beſides the Father, whom men ought to honour and reſpect together with the Father; which Perſon, is his Son; the Perſon that tells them this, who is one with the Father, and inſeparable from him. I have already given ſufficient demonſtration of this, from our Saviour's own words, in the preceding pages. And indeed his own diſcourſes run more upon this topick, than the epiſtles written by St. *Paul*, and the other ſacred writers. The reaſon whereof is obvious. His diſcourſes were to thoſe only who believ'd in the true God the Father before; and therefore the chief deſign to be effected, was to induce them to believe in the Son alſo.

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* *John* 10. 39.

† Ch. 11. 27.

‡ *Matt.* 22. 41. *Mark* 12. 35. *Luke* 20. 41.

** *Luke* 20. 3.

Hence it is that he ſays: *Ye believe in God; believe alſo in me. I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father; but by me* *. *He that hath ſeen me, hath ſeen the Father* †. *If any man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him* ‡. Is this a ſtyle proper, I do not ſay to any mere man, but to the higheſt, or moſt perfect of all created beings?

Let any Socinian, or Arian tell us, what occaſion there was for a mere embaſſador or agent between God and man, to aſſume ſo much every where to himſelf, to lay ſo much ſtreſs upon his own perſonal dignity; to ſet forth his own perſonal powers and prerogatives, and, upon theſe grounds, to demand honour and worſhip to himſelf, together with the Father. Would it not have been ſufficient for him to have preſs'd and inculcated the doctrine of the one God; the neceſſity of obedience to his laws; the rewards attending it; and the penalties conſequent, upon the neglect of it? Did ever any teacher, prophet, or angel, think religion ſo much concern'd in his own perſonal honour, and not rather in the honour of his Lord and Maſter? Might not all the practical duties of chriſtianity have been juſt what they are, and men have been inſtructed in their very way to heaven, and taught to refer all worſhip to God the Father only, without the conſideration of what other perſons he was pleas'd to employ, or any regard to them, more than to prophets, or angels, acting in his name, or ſerving under him?

Why all this weight and ſtreſs laid upon the duty of believing in the Son, as well as in the Father; loving the Son; keeping his words; and honouring the Son, even as men honour the Father; with more characters of diſtinction, proper only to a Perſon truly divine, throughout the New Teſtament? There muſt be ſomething more in all this, than either the Socinian or Arian principles can be ſufficient to account for; more than, according to the common terms of ſpeaking among men, can comport with the character of an extraordinary embaſſador, as ſuch, or a mere mediator. One would be rather apt to conclude, and it is the moſt natural concluſion that can be made upon our reading the New Teſtament, that the principal end and deſign of Chriſtianity, conſider'd as a new religion or diſpenſation grafted upon the jewiſh, was to let mankind into the myſtery of three Perſons in the Unity of the Godhead; and to teach them to pay diſtinct honour and worſhip to each perſon. *Tertullian* ſeems to have taken this matter very right, when he tells *Praxeas*, that it was reverting to Judaiſm, to believe the one God in ſuch a ſenſe, as to exclude the Son and Holy Ghoſt. " For, ſays he, what other difference of " any moment is there between us and them? What do we owe " peculiar to the goſpel? What has the New Teſtament, (which " tells us, *the law and the prophets were until John* *) added of " ſuch mighty importance, were it not that, from the time of it, " Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, are believed to be three diſtinct " Perſons, and to be one God? God was pleas'd to introduce a " new diſpenſation, for the ſake of a new faith in the one God, " as comprehending the Son and Holy Spirit, that God might " now be clearly repreſented under diſtinct names and perſonali" ties, who had indeed before been manifeſted, but not ſo diſtinct" ly, in the Son and Holy Ghoſt. This is *Tertullian*'s ſenſe, tho' not a literal tranſlation. The thought is very juſt, as well as noble and elevated, and apt to raiſe in our minds ideas ſuitable to the Majeſty of God, and the dignity of the evangelical diſpenſation. As the glory of God is the ultimate end and deſign of all things; ſo particularly the great end and deſign of the chriſtian diſpenſation, was to diſplay God's glory, not conſider'd as a ſingle ſolitary Deity, in the Jewiſh, Sabellian, or Arian ſenſe, but in three diſtinct Perſons therein illuſtriouſly repreſented, according to their diſtinct names, characters, and offices. And whoever well conſiders, among other things, the form of admiſſion into the chriſtian church, preſcrib'd and left by our bleſſed Saviour, and the particular ſtreſs always laid upon it by the ancients, and for the ſake of the doctrine it imported, will be inclin'd to believe, that this is not a mere ſpecious conjecture, but a truth founded upon very good and weighty reaſons.

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* *John* 14. 1, 6. † ỳ. 9. ‡ ỳ. 23.

To return now to the fourteenth chapter of St. *John*. Let any man attentively read, and conſider it throughout, and he will find it a ſtrong confirmation of what we have been aſſerting. Let it eſpecially be conſider'd, what our bleſſed Lord was ſo careful to inculcate to the diſciples, and what he meant by that kind and gentle rebuke to *Philip*. *Have I been ſo long time with you, and yet haſt thou not known me, Philip* †? Was it that he did not know of his miraculous conception? That is too ſlight an evaſion to be pretended. Was it that he did not know him to be the *Chriſt*, or *Meſſiah?* This, *Philip* was one of the firſt who had diſcover'd [*]; and all the diſciples, except *Judas*, had not only more than once confeſs'd it by the mouth of *Peter*; but alſo, that he was the *Son of the living God*. What was it then that *Philip* ſtill wanted to be more fully inſtructed in? It was plainly this, that, *he that had ſeen the Son*, had therein *ſeen the Father* too [†]; that he was *in the Father, and the Father in him*. In a word, that he was Son in ſo tranſcendent and eminent a ſenſe, as to be one and the ſame God with the Father. This was the ſublime myſtery which the diſciples themſelves were but let into gradually; and the full and ſublime ſenſe whereof, was yet, in ſome meaſure, a ſecret to them.

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* *Luke* 16. 16. † *John* 14. 9.

With this light we may clearly diſcover the argument and coherence of all that we meet with in that chapter; and particularly, the reaſon of our Saviour's mentioning [‡] the Paraclete, or Holy Ghoſt, immediately after he had given ſo full an account of himſelf. But without this, it will be difficult to make out ſo clear a thread; or to account for the ſeveral very remarkable particulars of it. And, that we may not be offended at what our bleſſed Lord ſays, *my Father is greater than I* [**]; which is very true in a certain ſenſe, in reſpect of his derivation as a Son from the Father; yet the context ſhews, that ſomething elſe is there meant. *If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, becauſe I ſaid, I go unto the Father; for my Father is greater than I:* That is, greater in reſpect of that ſtate of glory, of which the Son, by his condeſcenſion, had, in a manner, to appearance at leaſt, diveſted himſelf; and which he had ever enjoy'd with the Father, *before the world was* [††]. This condeſcenſion, or humiliation of the Son of God, from a ſtate of glory, to a low paſſive afflicted ſtate, is the great myſtery of the divine philanthropy, ſo much magnify'd in holy ſcripture; and is what the *angels deſire to look into* [‡‡]. The Antiochian fathers, againſt *Paul* of *Samoſate*, well expreſs this humiliation of the Son [*]; *God emptying himſelf of that glorious ſtate of equality with God*; to take on him the form of a ſervant.

Our bleſſed Lord, in the next chapter but one, ſtill perſiſts in repeating and inculcating the ſame great truth. After a third mention made of the Holy Spirit, and what he ſhould do, he adds, *he ſhall glorify me*. And why? Becauſe his works will be my works; *he ſhall receive of mine* [*]. But why *mine?* Doth not he proceed from the Father [†]? Yes: But he proceeds from me too. *For all things that the Father hath are mine* [‡]. Theſe are ſtrong expreſſions, but muſt appear very ſtrange too, and unaccountable, if the Son were a creature only; or if no more were meant by them, than that he was a teacher ſent from God. If we may believe plain words ſpoken by our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, here is a full proof of a perfect communication of all things, and of an individual unity of power in the three Perſons of the ever bleſſed Trinity, as could have been, ſuppoſing our principles really true. And it is obſervable, as hath been before intimated, that this was ſpoken to perſons who were already believers, and did not doubt of his being commiſſion'd by God. But now they receiv'd farther light, underſtanding that he had been ever [**] with the Father, before his coming into the world, and was again to return to the Father, to the ſame ſtate of glory he had with him from the beginning. All which muſt convince them, that he was the *Son of God* in a peculiar, ſublime, and ſtrict ſenſe.

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[*] *John* 1. 47.

[†] Ch. 14. 9, 10.

[‡] *John* 14. 26. compar'd with 15. 26.

[**] *John* 14. 28.

[††] *Phil.* 2. 7. *John* 17. 4, 5.

[‡‡] 1 *Pet.* 1. 12.

[*] Θεὸς μὲν κενώσας ἑαυτὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ. Labbe, vol. 1. p. 848.

IN the next chapter, we find our Saviour praying to the Father to glorify the Son [††]: And why? That the Son alſo might glorify him. Is this the ſtyle of an embaſſador? Or is it ſuitable to the decorum and diſtance to be obſerv'd in the addreſſes of any creature towards his creator?

THE ſame word *glorify* is equally applied to both the offices, repreſented as reciprocal. Afterwards he adds, *this is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God.* Why might he not put a period to what he was ſaying here? *Novatian* has told us the reaſon of it [‡‡]; becauſe he would be underſtood to be God as well as the Father; therefore he added, *and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent.* So far were the writers before the council of *Nice* from countenancing the Arian interpretation of this text. It is not entirely foreign to our purpoſe to take notice, that *eternal life*, is here ſaid not to depend upon our knowledge of the Father only, but of both Perſons; which is an argument that the Son came to propoſe himſelf, as well as the Father, to the world, the great object of our faith and hope [*].

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[*] *John* 16. 14. [†] See Ch. 15. 26. [‡] Ch. 15. 16. [**] ℣. 28, 30.

[††] *John* 17.

[‡‡] *Quoniam & (ſe) Deum accipi voluit.* Novat. c. 14.

[*] In this ſenſe it is, that *Irenæus* tells us: *In Novo Teſtamento ea quæ eſt ad Deum fides hominum aucta eſt, additamentum accipiens Filium Dei.* It will be no eaſy matter to reconcile this with the notion of a mere mediator, himſelf a creature, and ſent to reduce us to a firm faith in God only.

THERE is one place more in the goſpels [*], which will deſerve our careful conſideration. When our Lord was brought before *Caiphas* and the *Sanhedrim*, and they were much at a loſs how to find any ſufficient ground for matter of accuſation againſt him; their witneſſes not agreeing, or their evidence not coming up to the point; they next endeavour to draw ſomething, if poſſible, from his own confeſſion. According to St. *Luke* [†], (who ſeems to have reported diſtinctly, what St. *Matthew* and St. *Mark* contracted into a narrower compaſs) they firſt aſk him if he was the *Chriſt*; to which he made them no direct anſwer; probably becauſe they would interpret it *King*, in the ſenſe of thoſe who look'd for a temporal *Meſſiah*, and thereupon form an accuſation before *Pilate*, that our Lord had ſet himſelf up for a King. This queſtion therefore he declin'd with his uſual caution.

THEY next aſk'd him, if he was the *Son of God* [‡]; and he immediately acknowledg'd that he was. Upon this they charg'd him, not with making himſelf *King*, (as they would probably have done, had *Chriſt*, and *Son of God*, been ſynonymous expreſſions) but with blaſphemy; and we find that the Jews inſiſted upon this charge againſt him before *Pilate*. *We have a law*, ſay they, *and by our law he ought to die, becauſe he made himſelf the Son of God* [**].

THE law is recorded againſt blaſphemy in *Leviticus* [††], and the penalty was, that the blaſphemer ſhould be ſton'd to death. The very penalty which the Jews would have executed upon him for the ſame charge of baſphemy in making himſelf the *Son of God* [‡‡]. This they interpreted one time, as if he made himſelf *equal with God* [*]. At another time they charg'd him with making himſelf *God* [†]. So that, whatever notions the Jews had of this phraſe, *Son of God*, as ordinarily attributed to the *Meſſiah*; which ſeem to have been very obſcure, looſe, and indefinite; yet they had ſenſe enough to perceive, that our Lord apply'd it to himſelf in the ſtrict and proper meaning; ſuch as could not be juſtly applicable to any creature whatever. *Pilate* himſelf was ſhock'd [‡], when he heard that our Lord had taken upon him the title of the *Son of God*; and it put him into ſuch a conſternation, that he repair'd again into the judgment-hall [**], to make farther enquiry about ſo important a claim; and the firſt queſtion he aſk'd our bleſſed Lord related to his extraction; *Whence he was?* To which he receiv'd no anſwer, our Lord not thinking it fit to communicate ſo high a myſtery to a *Roman* governor, not prepar'd to receive it. Or rather, perhaps, leſt a direct anſwer might occaſionally have obſtructed his deſign of laying down his life at the time, or after the manner predetermin'd, for the ſins of the world. Thus much, however, we may infer from this incident, that *Pilate* underſtood the phraſe of *Son of God*, as it denoted his divine extraction, in the proper ſenſe; and thought the Jews, in their charge, ſo underſtood it, as well as that our Saviour deſign'd it, in his taking it upon him; and he was therefore under very terrible apprehenſions, leſt he ſhould blindly paſs ſentence upon a perſon, that might be, after all, really of divine original.

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[*] *Matt.* 26. 57. *Mark* 14. 53. *Luke* 22. 66. [†] *Luke* 22. 66. [‡] ℣. 70. [**] *Matt.* 26. 65. *Mark* 14. 64. *John* 19. 7. [††] *Lev.* 24. 16. [‡‡] See *John* 5. 18. Ch. 8. 59. Ch. 10. 31, 39. [*] Ch. 5. 18. [†] Ch. 10. 33. [‡] Ch. 19. 8. [**] ℣. 9.

ALL that I ſhall farther remark concerning our Lord's own teſtimony, as to the preſent article, is, that after his reſurrection, he permitted ſeveral to worſhip him [*]; and ſuffer'd *Thomas* to recognize him with the titles of, *my Lord, and my God* [†]: And afterwards left orders with his diſciples to baptize in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt.

I have laid theſe things together, in the order of time, as they occur in the goſpels, that the reader may be able to form a judgment from what our Lord himſelf, directly and in perſon, taught, in the diſcharge of his prophetical office. I ſhall now only ſum up the evidence, that the reader may have it in one view, and ſee the more clearly the application of it, and what it amounts to. The queſtion is, in what ſenſe our bleſſed Lord is the *Son*, or *only begotten Son of God?* We have theſe marks and characters to determine the ſenſe of theſe appellations. By the confeſſion and acknowledgment of all ſides, the title of *Son of God* was peculiarly and emphatically aſcrib'd to the *Meſſiah*, he was *the Son* [‡]. It was a title, which our Lord himſelf particularly inſiſted on; and as he was pleas'd, upon that topick eſpecially, to magnify the exceeding great mercy and favour of God in the new diſpenſation; ſo he reſolved the great guilt and heinous aggravation of unbelief into this; that it was rejecting a perſon of ſuch eminent dignity, as the *only begotten* Son of God. He frequently explains it to ſuch a ſenſe, as made the hearers charge him directly with blaſphemy. In all his anſwers to which charge, he inſiſts upon his own perſonal dignity, and aſſerts, that he aſſum'd nothing but what he had a ſtrict and proper right to. He never would declare, that he was not God, or not equal with God, tho' preſs'd by his adverſaries upon that head. He accepted worſhip and adoration, and the title of Lord and God, without any marks of diſlike, with favour and approbation. Tho' he referr'd every thing to the Father, as the fountain and original; yet he claim'd honour, glory, and worſhip to himſelf, together with the Father. He never ſo referr'd all to the Father, as to leave us to imagine, that it was not by his own power that he did every thing that he did. *Peter* and *John* renounce all pretence to ſelf-honour, on account of the miracles they wrought [*], not being wrought by their *own power or holineſs*. But the caſe was different with our Lord. His miracles were his own. As he had *life in himſelf* [†]; ſo he had *power in himſelf* too, tho' deriv'd from the Father; and his diſtinct powers, and perſonal perfections were by himſelf made a foundation for perſonal honour; that *all men might honour the Son, even as they honour the Father* [‡]. He had all that the Father hath, and was able to do *all that the Father doth*; and claim'd equal authority and power in the higheſt acts of authority, thoſe of *remitting ſins*, executing judgment, enacting laws, and demanding obedience to them, upon the ſanction of rewards and puniſhments. When he gave laws, his language was not, *The Lord ſaith*; but, *I ſay unto you*. And when he heal'd the leper, he expreſſes his own proper volition to that end; *I will*; *be thou clean*. The leaſt that can be inferr'd from his authoritative ſtyle and manner, in the whole courſe of his miniſtry, is, that he was in the place of God, inveſted with all the authority and ſovereignty that the Father himſelf is inveſted with; and had the ſame rightful claim to ſubmiſſion, homage, and adoration with him. How can ſuch plenary authority; ſuch titles as manifeſtly ſuppoſe and imply omnipotence, omnipreſence, and every divine attribute, belong to any creature? Or, could the relation of a proper Son of God, admitting that *Jeſus Chriſt* really was ſo, have been deſcrib'd in more ſtrong, lively, and ſignificant terms? They all denote ſuch intimacy, ſuch perfect union and equality, as can only be conceiv'd between perſons of the ſame nature and eſſence, and which cannot, according to any rules of reaſon or propriety, or the high veneration we owe to the dignity of the divine nature, be ſaid to ſubſiſt between God, and any of his creatures.

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[*] *Matt.* 28. 9.

[†] *John* 20. 28.

[‡] ὁ υἱὸς, ſo called *κατ' ἐξοχήν*.

I have inſiſted the longer upon the teſtimonies which we meet with in the goſpels, concerning the divinity of the Son, and chiefly in our bleſſed Saviour's own diſcourſes, becauſe they may very probably have more weight with ſome perſons, than the teſtimonies to the ſame purpoſe which occur in the *Acts of the apoſtles*, or the *Epiſtles* which were occaſionally written by ſeveral of them. However, it is to be hop'd, there are very wiſe and good men, who will be glad of any other proper evidence towards confirming ſo important an article, which I ſhall therefore endeavour, in the next place, to produce.

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[*] *Acts* 3. 12.

[†] *John* 5. 26.

[‡] Ch. ibid.

Sect. II.

Teſtimonies concerning the divinity of the Son from other parts of the New Teſtament.

THO' I might cite certain paſſages from the Acts of the holy apoſtles to prove the [*] divine filiation of *Jeſus*; yet as he is deſcrib'd in them, not as *Chriſt*, but as the Son of God; a title which, as I have ſhew'd before, imported a more ſpecial, or rather, proper relation to God, and was underſtood to do ſo by the Jews; I ſhall not, in proof his divinity, inſiſt any farther upon that diſtinguiſhing appellation, conſider'd abſtractedly, and without any additional light to determine the ſenſe of it, but proceed to conſider what proofs may be drawn towards eſtabliſhing this article from the canonical Epiſtles.

In the firſt chapter of the epiſtle to the *Romans*, there occurs a remarkable paſſage relating to the point under conſideration. *His Son Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, who was made of the ſeed of David according to the fleſh, and declar'd to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holineſs* [†], *by the reſurrection from the dead* [‡]. Here we have a plain diſtinction made between the *Son of David*, and the *Son of God*; or, in other words, between our Lord's human and divine nature. A diſtinction of which, as I have before obſerv'd, the Phariſees were ignorant, tho' their ignorance was ſo culpable, that our bleſſed Lord took occaſion to rebuke them for it. There is a parallel text of St. *Paul*, which ſhould be ſubjoin'd to the other, that from both together we may the more clearly apprehend the apoſtle's meaning. It is that where he ſays; *Of whom* [**], *according to the fleſh, Chriſt came, who is over all, God bleſſed for ever* [††]. In the two texts the antitheſis between the words [‡‡], *according to the fleſh*, and *according to the ſpirit*, is very obſervable. With reſpect to the former, he is the Son of *David*; in reſpect of the latter, he is the Son of God; or, what is equivalent, *over all, God bleſſed for ever*. And it is well known, that the word [*] which we render *ſpirit*, is uſed by the earlieſt chriſtian writers to denote the divine nature of *Chriſt* [†]. From theſe two paſſages therefore of St. *Paul*, two things may be clearly deduc'd. Firſt, that our bleſſed Lord is the Son of God, not in reſpect of office, power, or dominion; but in reſpect of his nature. It is [‡] *according to the Spirit of holineſs*, in reſpect of his holy, or divine nature, that he is ſtyl'd the *Son of God*. And ſecondly, that in the ſame reſpect, he is *God over all; bleſſed for ever*. So that to be Son of God, or to be truly and eſſentially God, does, in the language of St. *Paul* (ſufficiently authoriz'd by what I have before cited from the words of our Lord himſelf) come to the ſame thing. I ſhall not think it worth my time to defend the vulgar reading of the latter text [**], or the application of it to the perſon of our Saviour; both are ſupported by all antiquity, as well before, as after the nicene council [††].

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[*] *Acts* 8. 37. Ch. 9. 20.

[†] Κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης.

[‡] *Rom.* 1. 3, 4.

[**] Τὸ κατὰ σάρκα.

[††] *Rom.* 9. 5.

[‡‡] Κατὰ σάρκα, ad κατὰ πνεῦμα.

The argument for the Son's real divinity founded upon theſe two texts, is ſo full, clear, and convincing, that the poor evaſions found out hitherto, in anſwer to it, have ſerv'd only to ſupport and confirm it.

St. *Paul*, in the eighth chapter of the ſame epiſtle [‡‡], ſpeaks of God's ſending his *own Son* in the likeneſs of ſinful fleſh; and, to ſhew us what he means by *Son*, a little after he makes the *Spirit of God*, and the *Spirit of Chriſt*, equivalent expreſſions [*], to denote one and the ſame thing, or perſon. Which is a farther proof, that the *Son of God*, with St. *Paul*, is the ſame in effect, with being really and truly God.

Another very remarkable paſſage to our purpoſe, is in the firſt chapter of the epiſtle to the *Coloſſians*, where our bleſſed Lord is ſtyl'd the [†] *Son of his love* [‡]; which character the apoſtle explains afterwards in very high and magnificent terms. *Who is the image of the inviſible God, the firſt-born of every creature* [**]. *For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, viſible and inviſible; whether thrones, or dominions, or*

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[*] Πνεῦμα.

[†] See the teſtimonies in *Grotius*, on *Mark* 2. 8. To which the learned Biſhop *Bull* has added others. Def. F. Nic. p. 19. and brought ſeveral texts of ſcripture to confirm them. *Mark* 2. 8. 1 *Tim*. 3. 16. *Heb*. 9. 14. 1 *Pet*. 3. 18.

[‡] Κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης.

[**] *Rom*. 9. 5.

[††] See Dr. *Mills* upon it. *Bull's* Def. p. 78. Or *Petavius*, l. 2. c. 9. p. 154. *Pearſon* on the creed, p. 132. *Never any ancient chriſtian, interpreter, or expoſitor, or any other writer* (as a learned author obſerves) *did otherwiſe underſtand this text, but of Chriſt; and not only catholicks, but even hereticks and ſchiſmaticks*, &c. Dr. *Grabe* on *Whiſt*. Teſtim. p. 23.

[‡‡] *Rom*. 8. 3.

[*] ℣. 9.

[†] *Coloſſ*. 1. 13.

[‡] Τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ.

[**] Πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως.

principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things conſiſt [*].

THE firſt remark I have to make here is, that our Lord is repreſented as the *Son of God*, not only before his incarnation, but antecedently to the creation itſelf: And therefore it is a vain and fruitleſs attempt for any one to endeavour to account for the title of *Son*, or *only Son*, from his immaculate Conception, or even from his *Meſſiaſhip*; both which are confeſſedly poſterior to that Sonſhip, which St. *Paul* ſpeaks of here; and from whence it may be again obſerv'd, that *Son of God* and *Meſſias*, tho' titles belonging to the ſame perſon, are not phraſes ſtrictly ſynonymous. In the next place, St. *Paul* has in theſe two or three verſes ſo emphatically and magnificently deſcrib'd the ſuperlative dignity and eminency of our bleſſed Lord, making him as well Creator as Preſerver of all things, that one can hardly imagine how any other expreſſions, either clearer or ſtronger, could have been employ'd to ſignify, that the *Son of God* is *very God of very God*, truly and eſſentially God.

LASTLY, his being call'd [†] *the firſt-born of every creature*, ſuggeſts a thought, which was very familiar to the ancients, and may deſerve the particular notice of the reader. They ſuppoſe, that when it pleas'd God to create the world, he ſent forth the *Word* [‡], or [**] *his only Son*, who had been always with him, to create all things, and, as it were, to preſent them to him when created, to the end they might be approv'd and accepted of him; nothing being worthy of his acceptance, but by, and in his beloved Son, *in whom he is well pleaſed*. In this ſenſe, *all things were created by, and for* the Son; and *in him all things conſiſt*. He is the head of all things that are; [††] *having in all things the preeminence*. He goes out from the Father, creates the world, lays it before him, as his own, and then puts himſelf at the head of it, and in this ſenſe is [‡‡] *the firſt-born of every creature*. Afterwards he was pleas'd to dignify human nature, by aſſuming it into a perſonal union with the divine nature, and ſo too made it his own. He is therefore the [*] head in this reſpect; and ſtyl'd likewiſe [†] *the firſt-born from the dead*. St. *Paul* tells us, that *Chriſt both died, and roſe again, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living*. And in like manner, he condeſcended to take upon him the charge of the whole creation, that he might as the apoſtle infers, in all *things have the pre-*

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[*] *Coloſſ.* I. 15, 16, 17.

[†] Πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως.

[‡] Λόγος.

[**] Μονογενής.

[††] Ἐν πᾶσι πρωτεύων.

[‡‡] Πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως.

[*] Ἀρχή.

[†] Πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν.

eminence; thus he is our mediator, our Lord, and the ſuſtainer of the whole creation [*]. As the Son of God then condeſcended to be the head of the whole creation, to render it accepted with God the Father; ſo, in the ſecond creation, or redemption of mankind, he was pleas'd to take upon him the like office; to be the head of the church; and to recommend and reconcile thoſe whom he had redeem'd to the favour and acceptance of God the Father, by virtue of his filial relation to him, and perfect union with them.

I ſhall only remark farther; that as the Son is repreſented both as making and ſuſtaining all created beings, he could not himſelf be a creature. And if all creatures, as creatures, ſtand in need of ſuch aſſiſtance from the Son of God, which is repreſented by the ancients as a condeſcenſion in him to afford; it is again plain, that he is infinitely ſuperior to the rank of creatures, and is therefore eſſentially God.

BUT I need not labour this point by inferences and deductions; for the apoſtle, in the very next chapter, ſpeaks ſo plainly and expreſſly, that there is no room left for any reaſonable doubt concerning it. After he has mention'd the [†] *myſtery of God* [‡], relating to the Father, and his Son *Chriſt Jeſus*, *in whom are hid all the treaſures of wiſdom and knowledge*; of whom he had before ſaid, *it pleaſed the Father that in him ſhould all fulneſs dwell* [**]: I ſay, after this, he cautions the *Coloſſians* againſt *enticing words, of philoſophy, and vain deceit* [††]; whether of Jews or Gentiles, or, as is moſt probable, of the Gnoſtick hereticks, that labour'd to introduce a low and mean opinion of *Chriſt Jeſus the Lord*. And, to prevent the ill effects of their doctrine, he exhorts the *Coloſſians* to conſtancy and perſeverance in the faith [‡‡]; particularly in what relates to the perſonal dignity of our bleſſed Saviour, *in whom*, ſays he, *dwelleth all the fulneſs of the Godhead bodily* [*]. If, inſtead of *bodily*, we ſhould tranſlate the word *ſubſtantially*, or *eſſentially*, for which verſion, we might urge the authority of ſome learned criticks, the leaſt that can be inferr'd is, that the whole divinity was united with the humanity of *Chriſt*, to render him both God and man; as the Antiochian fathers well explain it againſt *Paul* of *Samoſate* [†]. And this explication is very agreeable, not only to the ſenſe of the verſes going before, but to the argument of the whole preceding chapter, which, as we have already ſeen, is chiefly deſign'd to repreſent the ſupereminent dignity of our Saviour's Perſon.

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[*] See *Euſebius*, Panegyr. in Conſtant. c. 14. p. 525. And *Athanaſius*, vol. 1. p. 530, &c.

[†] Καὶ Πατρὸς ϗ τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

[‡] *Coloſſ*. 2. 2.

[**] Ch. 1. 19.

[††] Ch. 2. 4, 8.

[‡‡] ℣. 7.

[*] Ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τῆς Θεότητος σωματικῶς.

[†] Labbe, tom. 1. p. 848.

Those who would interpret this of the Father's dwelling or reſiding in *Chriſt*, if they underſtand his inhabitation only in ſuch a low ſenſe, as God may be ſaid,in a ſenſe, to reſide in a creature, do really ſay nothing; but make the apoſtle's whole diſcourſe, in this and the preceding chapter, very foreign to his principal argument. But if they intend the intimate union and communion between Father and Son in all things, and in all perfections, it amounts to the ſame with what we have aſſerted.

Some pretend that the word * *Godhead* ſignifies dominion, power, and authority, not real divinity. But, beſides that, this pretence is groundleſs, and eaſily confuted by the interpretation of the place, from the moſt early eccleſiaſtical writers; it is a pretence that can ſerve to little purpoſe; ſince it can never be believ'd by any rational man, that a perſon, who is not ſtrictly and eſſentially God, ever had, or ever can have, all the power, authority, or dominion of God. It is to no effect to ſay, that divinity is only an attribute, and that there is a difference between the Godhead and the divine nature, the latter properly denoting ſubſtance. For let Godhead, or divinity, ſignify an attribute, as well as the word infinity, or omnipotence; yet divinity can be no where without a divine ſubſtance, any more than infinity can be any where without ſomething infinite; or Almighty power without a ſubject, wherein it reſides. And if perfect divinity, and perfect humanity, were both united in the perſon of our Saviour, what does it but in other words imply, that he had both the divine, and human ſubſtance united; was perfect God, and perfect man, which is the truth of the caſe; and it will be impoſſible otherways to make out a juſt coherence, or thread of argument, from what the apoſtle ſays in this, and the preceding chapter.

Let us proceed, in the next place, to the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, attributed to the ſame apoſtle.

This epiſtle begins with ſetting forth the dignity of the perſon of the Son of God, as the leading article of the chriſtian religion, and the ſtrongeſt motive to excite our gratitude, and to raiſe in us ideas ſuitable to a mercy ſo tranſcendent and ineſtimable, as that of God's ſending his own Son to take our nature upon him. Here we find him deſcrib'd in the moſt bright and ſublime characters. It is the Son, *by whom God made the worlds*; the † *ſhining forth of the Father's glory*; *the expreſs image of his perſon*; *upholding all things by the word of his power*; *whom all the angels of God* are commanded to *worſhip*; whoſe title is *God*, and whoſe *throne is for ever and ever. The Lord* (Jehovah) *who in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth*, and the *work of whoſe hands the heavens are*; whoſe property it is to be immutably *the ſame* *, and to endure from generation to generation. This is the deſcription and character of him, who is emphatically and properly the *Son of God*.

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* Θεότης. † Ἀπαύγασμα.

THE judicious reader will obſerve, that what is remark'd of the Son, in this chapter, is the very ſame, only differently expreſs'd, with what we met with in the epiſtle to the *Coloſſians*: And there is, indeed, a natural congruity in the thing, that the ſame perſon who had born ſo conſiderable a part in the firſt creation, ſhould have the like pre-eminence in the ſecond likewiſe; that the creator of the world ſhould be reſtorer of it too, and be both Lord and Heir, with reſpect to the new ſtate and condition of mankind in right of redemption, as he had been Lord before in right of creation.

IN the third chapter, the inſpir'd penman ſtill goes on to ſet forth the ſupereminent dignity of our bleſſed Lord; and this he does by a compariſon of him with *Moſes*, ſhewing the difference betwixt them in a twofold reſpect. Firſt, that *Chriſt* is the builder and founder of the jewiſh church, and really God: *Moſes* only a member of that church, under Chriſt the head. Secondly, that *Chriſt* is the Son of God, and maſter over his own houſe: *Moſes* a ſervant only. The words run thus, with a little variation from the common reading. *This perſon (Chriſt) was counted worthy of more glory than Moſes, in as much as he who hath builded the houſe hath more honour than the houſe; for every houſe is builded by ſome one; but he that built all things, is God. And Moſes was verily faithful in all his houſe as a ſervant; but Chriſt as a Son over his own houſe* †.

THERE is no reaſon to doubt but that the title of God in the fourth verſe is apply'd to *Chriſt*, if we conſider how pertinent it is to the argument of the inſpir'd author: And that the ſame author, in the firſt chapter, aſcribes the making and upholding of *all things* to the Son. But were this leſs certain than it is, yet the ſixth verſe implies the ſame thing; interpreting the relation of Son in ſo high a ſenſe, as to give him all the right and power in the Father's houſe, as if it were really his own houſe: Which, as it is conformable to the whole tenour, and conſtant language of the New Teſtament, as we have obſerv'd from the paſſages above cited; ſo it is a clear and undeniable argument, that *Chriſt* is Son of God, in the ſtrict and proper ſignification; and not a creature of God. What poor jejune ſenſe muſt thoſe perſons make of the ſacred writings, who either pretend to refer all the high powers and privileges of the Son to his immaculate conception; or reſolve them into I know not what imaginary adoption, of which the ſcriptures ſay nothing, and which is much too weak a foundation to bear all the ſtreſs and weight, that is every where laid upon the relation of *Chriſt* to the Father.

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* *Heb.* 1. 2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 12.

† Ch. 3. 3, 4, 5, 6.

From what hath been collected and laid together from our Lord's own diſcourſes, and the epiſtles of St. *Paul*, the impartial and ingenuous reader will find it neceſſary to believe, that the title of *Son of God* was not apply'd to him in a looſe figurative ſenſe; but was intended to ſignify his peculiar relation to God the Father, antecedent to the creation of the world: And not only that; but his intimate union and communion with the Father in all things, in nature, power, and every divine perfection conſider'd abſtractedly from the Father's perſonality.

I ſhall only add a confirmation of what has been ſaid from the writings of St. *John*, whoſe teſtimony is the more conſiderable, as coming laſt, and as being principally deſign'd againſt the hereticks of his time; who had endeavour'd to corrupt the faith, and to introduce mean and unworthy notions of the perſon of our bleſſed Saviour. The doctrine of a God incarnate, was a doctrine which the earlieſt hereticks could by no means aſſent to *. It was a point that ſeem'd ſo very incredible to them, that they choſe rather directly to deny the faith which they had been baptiz'd into, than to admit what appear'd ſo much above their low apprehenſions, and the notions commonly receiv'd. Two ways they took of avoiding the difficulty. One was to deny the divinity of our bleſſed Lord, making him a mere man. *Cerinthus* and *Ebion* took this method, only with this difference, that *Cerinthus*, the better to account for the apparent marks and characters of divinity in our bleſſed Lord, was pleas'd to ſuppoſe *Chriſt* (whom he makes a diſtinct perſon from *Jeſus*) to have deſcended upon him at his baptiſm, and to have continued with him till his paſſion †. *Ebion* contented himſelf with acknowledging one ſelf-exiſtent perſon ‡, excluſive of God the Son, making him a mere man, the Son of *Joſeph* and *Mary*; and, for that reaſon, very probably accounting for his miraculous works, and other characters of divinity conſpicuous in him, from the power and preſence of the Father with him. This was one way of eluding the doctrine of a God incarnate. The other was, not to deny the divinity of our Lord, but his humanity, reſolving the whole hiſtory of the incarnation of our Lord, his appearing as man, his converſing as ſuch in the world, and at length his ſuffering, into mere ſhew and deluſion. Theſe were the *Docetæ*, or *Phantaſiaſtæ*, the moſt early and numerous ſect of hereticks, who ſeem to have form'd their hereſy with no other view, but to avoid the difficulty of believing God and man in one perſon [*]. And finding the divinity of *Chriſt* to be a point ſo firmly eſtabliſh'd in the church, and ſo deeply rooted in the minds of all ſober chriſtians, they thought it the ſafer way to deny his humanity; which, however abſurd it was, might, they imagin'd, have ſome better appearance of probability than that evaſion, which, as I have obſerv'd, *Cerimbus* and *Ebion* had recourſe to.

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* See Iren. p. 185. Tertull. ad Marc. l. 3. c. 8.

† Iren. p. 105. Theod. p. 219. Epiph. p. 110.

‡ Ἕνα τὸ ἀγέννητον. Theodor. l. 2. c. 1.

It was after the riſe of both theſe hereſies, that St. *John* wrote his *Epiſtles*, his *Revelations*, and *Goſpel*; and therefore it is that he is more expreſs and particular in what relates to the perſonal dignity and divinity of *Chriſt Jeſus*, than any other of the inſpir'd writers. He begins his goſpel with a full declaration of the divinity of the [†] Word; who had exiſted with the Father from the beginning [‡]; and was God; not mere man of *Joſeph* and *Mary*, as *Cerinthus* had pretended. He immediately after attributes to him the work of creation [**]; and interprets his coming into the world, by his coming unto his *own* [††].

After he had thus ſufficiently aſſerted the divine nature of the Word, he proceeds to aſſert, that this very Word was perſonally united to the man *Jeſus*, and really took human nature upon him [‡‡], not in appearance only [*]. The Word was man, or became man, and dwelt among us, and *we beheld his glory, the glory, as of the only begotten of the Father* [†]; as of one who had been from the beginning with God, and was God; that is, God of God, as now explain'd by the title of [‡] *only begotten*.

That our Lord is here call'd the *only begotten*, in reſpect of his divine pre-exiſtent nature, is evident from the context, and the whole ſcope of the apoſtle in this chapter. [**] *The Word was made fleſh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glo-*

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[*] *Alii quoque hæretici uſque adeo Chriſti manifeſtam amplexati ſunt divinitatem, ut dixerint illum fuiſſe ſine carne, & totum illi ſuſceptum detraxerint hominem, ne decoquerent in illo divini nominis poteſtatem, ſi humanam illi ſociaſſent, ut arbitrabantur nativitatem. Quod tamen nos non probamus, ſed argumentum offerimus, uſque adeo Chriſtum eſſe Deum, ut quidam illum ſubſtracto homine, tantummodo putârint Deum.* Novat. de Trin. c. 18.

[†] Λόγος. [‡] *John* 1. 1. [**] ℣. 3. [††] ℣. 10, 11. [‡‡] ℣. 14.

[*] Ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο. [†] Ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ Πατρός. [‡] Μονογενής.

[**] Ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο, καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ Πατρός.

ry as of the only begotten of the Father. It is of the Word that the apoſtle ſpeaks; which, he ſays, * *tabernacled,* or dwelt, in our nature; whoſe glory was manifeſted to be ſuch as became a perſon of ſo high an extract; one that had been with God, and was God, and had created the world. So that there is a full and plain declaration of the divine generation of our Lord; which may let us into the meaning of this apoſtle in other places, where he ſo often gives our Lord the title of *Son,* or *Son of God.* And for this reaſon it is, that I choſe rather to begin with St. *John*'s goſpel, than with his other writings, tho' wrote after them.

In his firſt epiſtle, and in the firſt chapter, he delivers the ſame doctrine with what we have ſeen in his goſpel, and almoſt in the ſame words. Our Lord is there call'd the *Word of Life,* and *Life* †, as in the goſpel the *Word.* He is ſaid to have been ‡ *from the beginning;* as, in the goſpel, ** *in the beginning.* And, inſtead of *the Word was made fleſh,* &c. we have here, †† which *was manifeſted unto us:* And, inſtead of ‡‡ *with God,* we have here, * *with the Father.* All which confirm to us, what we have before obſerv'd, that God is call'd the Father of *Chriſt,* in reſpect of that nature, which he had with, and from the Father, before the foundation of the world; and that the Word was properly the *Son of God* before he aſſum'd human nature; and that therefore it is in this reſpect, that our Lord is every where emphatically ſtyl'd the *Son,* or *only Son,* or *only begotten Son of God;* which being ſo clear from ſcripture, and confirm'd by all antiquity, is a truth too firmly eſtabliſh'd to be eluded by any artifice of criticiſm. And now we may readily underſtand what St. *John* means, when he tells us, that *he is antichriſt that denieth the Father and the Son;* and that, *whoſoever denieth the Son, the ſame hath not the Father. In this was manifeſted the love of God towards us, because that God ſent his only begotten Son into the world. We have ſeen, and do teſtify, that the Father ſent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whoſoever ſhall confeſs that Jeſus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him* †: With more to the ſame purpoſe. The *antichriſts* which the apoſtle ſpeaks of, are the hereticks of thoſe times, of whom he ſays, *They went out from us, but they were not of us: For, if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us* ‡. Thoſe were they who deny'd the union of the man *Jeſus* with the Word, or *Son of God;* either denying that there was ever really any ſuch man; or aſſerting him to have been a mere man, not God and man.

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* Ἐσκήνωσεν. † Λόγος τῆς ζωῆς, and ἡ ζωή. ‡ Ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. ** Ἐν ἀρχῇ. †† Ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν. ‡‡ Πρὸς τὸν Θεόν. * Πρὸς τὸν Πατέρα. † *John* 2. 22, 23. Ch. 4. 9, 14, 15. ‡ Ch. 2. 19.

BOTH theſe, in effect, deny'd that *Jeſus* was the *Chriſt*: One, by making *Jeſus* nothing but a mere ghoſt, ſhadow, or apparition; the other, by ſeparating the perſon of *Jeſus* from that of *Chriſt*, and pretending that they were not one perſon, but two diſtinct perſons; *Chriſt* occaſionally deſcending on the perſon of *Jeſus*, and afterwards leaving it. And from hence we may underſtand what the apoſtle means by charging thoſe hereticks with denying *Jeſus* to be *Chriſt* *. Not that they deny'd (as many of them as own'd *Jeſus* to have been a real man) that he was a teacher ſent from God, or that he was the prophet foretold under the name of the *Meſſiah*; neither did they believe, with the Jews, that any other *Meſſiah* would come, or was to be expected: No; but their error was in denying the hypoſtatical union of the two natures, the divine and human, in the perſon of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and not acknowledging that *Jeſus*, who was in one reſpect really the Son of man, was alſo in another, really the Son of God; *begotten of the Father before the worlds, very God of very God.* Theſe were the *antichriſts*, who, by denying the Son, deny'd the Father alſo †; becauſe, tho' they receiv'd the Father as God, yet they did not receive him as Father of his only begotten Son *Chriſt Jeſus*; who had been from the beginning the Word, and the Son of the Father, of the ſame divine nature, ‡ *God.* As St. *John* expreſſly ſtyles him in his goſpel, the maker and framer of all things, and the Lord of all men; who condeſcended in time to become man, and ſo to be ** perfect God, and perfect man, by an ineffable union of both natures in one.

As this is the moſt obvious and natural ſenſe of the words of St. *John* in his epiſtle and goſpel, confirm'd by all the ancients, and deny'd by none but hereticks; ſo it is in vain for any man, by any ſubterfuge of criticiſm, or turn of wit, to attempt a different expoſition of them. The apoſtle concludes his epiſtle with words ſtill more expreſſive of the dignity, or rather divinity, of the Son of God, calling him not only *eternal life*, as he had done before ††, but *true God* likewiſe. *This is the true God, and eternal life* ‡‡. In his ſecond epiſtle, he hath theſe words; *Grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the Son of the Father.* Where, from his willing *grace, mercy, and peace* equally from both, we may reaſonably infer the divinity of *Chriſt*, and of his being equal to the Father, with reſpect to his Godhead; and from his being call'd *Lord*, and *Son* of the Father, we may no leſs juſtly conclude, that he is *Son* in reſpect of that nature which he had with the Father before the world was *. So uniform and conſtant is this divine writer to himſelf, and to the whole tenour of the ſcriptures, that it is really matter of wonder, how any perſon, that has the leaſt regard or reverence for the ſacred writings, ſhould make the leaſt ſcruple about ſo clear and evident a doctrine, as that *Jeſus Chriſt* was, in reſpect of his divine nature, truly and really Son of God, as much as, in reſpect of his human nature, truly Son of man.

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* See Ch. 2. 22. See alſo *Irenæus*, l. 8. c. 16.

† Ch. 2. 22.

‡ Θεός.

** Θεάνθρωπος.

†† Ch. 1. 2.

‡‡ Ch. 5. 20.

I will not employ any farther time in conſidering what teſtimonies may be cited from the *Revelations* to the ſame purpoſe, tho' many of great weight might be brought from thence, in confirmation of what hath been ſaid. Nor ſhall I trace the point through the ante-nicene, or poſt-nicene writers, who all, with one voice, conſpire to aſſert this great truth, and lay the greateſt ſtreſs upon it, as a fundamental doctrine of chriſtianity, and the great baſis of our faith and hope. The proper Sonſhip of *Chriſt* was, what all catholick antiquity ſteadily and conſtantly adhered to; and ſo were able to keep the right, and even path, which ſcripture had mark'd out to them, without being carry'd away by the chimerical fancies, and vain deluſions of the Gnoſticks, Valentinians, Sabellians, Tritheiſts, Samoſatenians, and Arians; who were all betray'd into a defection from the true faith, by giving too great a looſe to their imaginations, and by endeavouring to underſtand more of the myſtery of *Chriſt*'s relation to the Father, than their weak capacities could attain to, or is poſſibly attainable by any human capacity.

Sect. III.

A ſummary account of the catholick doctrine, concerning the divinity of the Son.

THE true catholick faith concerning *Jeſus Chriſt*, which has obtain'd univerſally, and from the beginning, and ſtill, God be thanked, obtains in all the churches of the world, is, that he is the true and proper Son of God, of the ſame divine nature and ſubſtance with the Father. He is properly a Son, and therefore no creature, which is againſt the Arians and Socinians. He is not the Father, but the Son; which confutes the Sabellians. He is not ſpecifically one with the Father, (as two original, abſolute, independent divinities might be ſuppos'd ſpecifically one) but he exiſts, as a Son, from, and in the Father; and therefore, in a certain ſenſe, is individually the ſame with him; which is againſt the Tritheiſts.

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* *John* i. 1, 11.—17. 5.

HERE then let us fix our faith, in relation to the article of the Son of God. He is the eternal Son of the eternal Father, coeſſential and co-equal with him. How this can be, is an enquiry, for which neither men, nor perhaps angels, have ſufficient ſtrength or extent of mind. Almoſt every age of the church has produc'd men of warm, lively, and ſtrong imaginations, who have fancy'd themſelves of a ſuperior and more penetrating genius, than is common to men; and ſo have been endeavouring to explode the doctrine of this article, under pretence of ſome appearing contradiction in it. But the force of ſcripture, tradition, and ſober reaſon, has as conſtantly prevail'd, and bore them down. It were now time for them to deſiſt, and to take warning from thoſe who have miſcarry'd before them; tho' they had done all that was poſſible for human wit, art, or learning to do, towards overthrowing this great truth. For fifteen centuries, at leaſt, the charge of contradiction has been brought againſt the orthodox, and never yet could be made good. The wiſeſt, the greateſt, the beſt of men, have, upon examination, all along ſubmitted to this ſtrange, and, as it is pretended, contradictory doctrine; and could never yet be convinc'd that there is any contradiction in it; but have plainly diſcover'd that the contrary doctrine to it, is moſt repugnant both to the words and ſenſe of the holy ſcriptures in general, and to one principal deſign of the New Teſtament. If men will indulge their fancies, they may imagine many contradictions in what relates to the divine eſſence and attributes. The eternity, the immenſity of God, and his preſcience, will furniſh men of ingenuity with as many appearing contradictions, as the doctrine we are ſpeaking of. All, at length, muſt terminate in this: Finite is not able to comprehend infinite; man is man; and God is God.

I ſhall only remark farther with relation to the preſent article, that many of the ante-nicene fathers held a twofold generation of the Word: One proper and eternal; the other improper and temporal. All implicitly held the eternal generation, believing the diſtinction of perſons; the conſubſtantiality and co-eternity, together with the prerogative of the Father, as firſt in order; which, laid together, make up the notion of eternal generation. Among thoſe who expreſſly aſſerted it, may be reckon'd theſe following, and perhaps others; *Ignatius*, *Irenæus*, *Origen*, *Dionyſius* Biſhop of *Alexandria*, *Gregory Thaumaturgus*, *Novatian*, *Methodius*; *Alexander* Biſhop of *Alexandria*: To whom we may add, *Conſtantine* the emperor, and *Euſebius*. And it is chiefly in reſpect of this eternal generation, that the Son is ſtyl'd by the ancients * *only begotten*.

As to the temporal generation of the Son, or of the Word, more properly call'd his † coming forth from the Father, in order to create the world; we find mention of it in ſeveral of the ancient writers; particularly *Juſtin Martyr*, *Athenagoras*, *Tatian*, *Theophilus* biſhop of *Antioch*, *Tertullian*, *Hippolytus*; beſides *Origen*, *Novatian*, and *Conſtantine*; who expreſſly mention both. In reſpect of this latter, and leſs proper generation, the Son is call'd, ‡ *the firſt-born of every creature*; and it is frequent with thoſe that ſpeak of him to aſcribe it to the will and power of the Father; ſuppoſing it a voluntary thing, and uſing the like expreſſions concerning it, as they do of the Son's third generation, when he became man. This I do but intimate, (not having room to enlarge) with deſign only to caution the reader from giving in too precipitately into the opinion of ſuch as would perſuade us, that the ancients intended theſe expreſſions of the Son's firſt generation, as deſign'd to make the Son nothing more than a voluntary production of the Father's, which is perfect Arianiſm; a hereſy which the ancients abhorr'd.

Some of the poſt-nicene fathers indeed, do allow of the Son's eternal generation, by the will of the Father, in a certain ſenſe: But they ſeem to have been led into it unawares, on occaſion of this dilemma propos'd by the Arians, that the Son muſt be generated, either with the conſent, or without the conſent of the Father, which they knew not readily how to anſwer, but upon that conceſſion. But as the dilemma itſelf was purely ſophiſtical; in a while they diſcover'd the weakneſs and impertinence of it; and anſwer'd it better, by retorting this queſtion upon the Arians. Whether God the Father was God, with, or without his own conſent? Which effectually ſilenc'd the former cavil about God the Son, and his generation; and ſhew'd it to be altogether trifling. Having ſufficiently ſhewn in what ſenſe our bleſſed Lord is the *Son of God*, there remains no doubt or ſcruple about the ſenſe intended in the creed. *Only begotten* is the word us'd in the creed; the moſt expreſſive of any ſingle word, to denote the proper generation of the Son, that could have been us'd. The pretence therefore of ſuch men is groundleſs, who think they may fairly ſubſcribe to the Apoſtle's creed, without believing the Son's proper filiation, which is there expreſs'd in the word *only begotten*; if it be interpreted, as it ought to be, according to ſcripture and catholick antiquity. And vain is the pretence, whether of Arians or Socinians, from the ſimplicity of the creed, as oppos'd to the Nicene or Athanaſian creed, both which laſt, only expreſs in many words, what this doctrine delivers in one word. And, I may add, the ſame concerning the ſecond article of our church; which declares, that *the Son is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlaſting of the Father; the very and eternal God, of one ſubſtance with the Father.* And tho' this article, as well as thoſe two creeds, may be of greater force againſt artful and deſigning men, who would interpret good words to a ſenſe never intended; yet, to men of chriſtian ſimplicity and ſincerity, the Apoſtle's creed imports the very ſame doctrine with them. And he that refuſes to ſubſcribe to them, or to any of them, for the ſake of the doctrine of the Son's divinity, cannot, I am perſuaded, conſcientiouſly ſubſcribe to the *Roman* creed; if he underſtand any thing either concerning the ſcripture doctrine, as to this point, or the primitive faith of the church.

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* Μονογενής. † Προέλευσις. ‡ Πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως.

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Chap. III.

And in Jeſus Chriſt his only Son our Lord.

THE only thing that remains to be conſider'd in this article, is the character of *Chriſt*, conſider'd as the *Lord Chriſt*. I have occaſionally obſerv'd before, that the title of Lord is aſcrib'd to him in right both of his creating and his redeming the world. The dominion which he exerciſes over all created beings in general, was founded on the former conſideration; and that which he exerciſes over mankind, eſpecially over chriſtians, and for which reaſon he is here, in a more peculiar ſenſe, ſtyl'd *our Lord*, is founded on the latter conſideration.

I ſhall not, in ſpeaking to this point, particularly inſiſt on the ſeveral texts of ſcripture which attribute this character to our Saviour in both reſpects, and in the higheſt ſenſe; a ſenſe proper only to a perſon who is truly and eſſentially God; but only cite two or three of the moſt clear and conſiderable teſtimonies out of them to my purpoſe. In the eighteenth chapter of *Geneſis*, the name of Lord, or *Jehovah*, the proper and incommunicable name of God, is more than once expreſſly attributed to one of the angels that appear'd to *Abraham*. In the following chapter *, it is ſaid, that *the Lord* (or *Jehovah*) *rain'd upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimſtone and fire from the Lord*. The perſon who here aſſum'd an angel, is the ſame who afterwards appear'd in the perſon of man. But if he were not really God, and therefore Lord in the higheſt ſenſe, what account can be given that God, who is jealous of his honour, and has declar'd he will not give his glory to another, ſhould yet communicate to another his proper and peculiar name; a name ſo ſacred to the Jews, that they did not think it lawful to pronounce it, and than which, there is no name in ſcripture ſo proper to denote the divine nature and perfections. For which reaſon the pſalmiſt uſes this ſolemn invocation to God; *Thou, whoſe name alone is Jehovah* †. Accordingly he declares by the prophet *Iſaiah*; *I am the Lord, that is my name* ‡.

Now we have no way of knowing God, as diſtinguiſh'd from all other beings, but by his name, and the perfections of his nature. If ſuch a name therefore, whereby thoſe perfections are moſt eminently and peculiarly expreſs'd, be really attributed to him, and to him *alone*; or in terms excluſive of all other beings, as *his name*; how is it to be ſuppos'd that any other being ſhould, either of himſelf aſſume, or be permitted by God, to aſſume it, without opening a door to the moſt groſs idolatry, and even rendring men excuſable for paying that honour and worſhip to a creature, which is due only to the ſupreme God.

The only pretence, in anſwer to the argument which we draw from our Saviour's being ſtyl'd Lord, or *Jehovah*, in the Old Teſtament, is, that he may be call'd ſo, as the miniſter, or embaſſador of God. But where, or with what propriety of ſpeech, does any miniſter, or embaſſador, call himſelf by the name of the Prince, from whom he is commiſſion'd. To ſuppoſe that one who acts in the name of another perſon, ſhould really aſſume his name; the name whereby he is properly known, or perſonally diſtinguiſh'd; is to make ſuch an agent that very perſon; directly to confound the natural reaſon of things, and all real diſtinction between the principal, and the agent.

But, admitting there were any grounds for this evaſion, which there are not either in reaſon or fact, ſtill it would be of no ſervice to our adverſaries in the preſent controverſy: Becauſe not only the proper name of God is attributed in ſcripture to the perſon commiſſion'd by him; but ſuch other characters and authoritative acts, as can only belong to God. Thus, when our Lord ſays in the declaration prefatory to the decalogue, *I am the Lord thy God, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the houſe of bondage:* And then immediately adds, *Thou ſhalt have no other Gods but me.* The words import, ſo far as we can conclude any thing from the natural force and import of words, that the Lord was not only nominally God, but really God, and in two of the higheſt and ſupreme acts of dominion; that of giving laws, and excluding all other perſons whatever from a participation of the ſame honour or authority with him. This could not be the language of one who merely perſonated the ſupreme God and Lord; but of one who was, in truth, himſelf both God and Lord. Otherways indeed the firſt commandment, if we conſider the Father and Son as two diſtinct beings, would, in the literal and direct ſenſe of it, render the Father incapable of having any worſhip paid to him, by propoſing the Son excluſively of the Father, as the Lord God of the Jews, and the ſole object of their homage and adoration.

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* *Gen.* 19. 24. † *Pſalm* 83. 18. ‡ *Iſaiah* 48. 8.

But I would principally obſerve, that *Chriſt* is Lord in the ſtrict and higheſt ſenſe, from his right of dominion as creator of the world. *The inviſible things of him,* ſaith the apoſtle, *from the creation of the world, are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead.* From which place, it is evident, that the ſovereignty of God over his creatures, for that is here the proper import of the word *Godhead,* is founded in his right of creating them. If then, as has been prov'd before, *Chriſt* was the creator of the world, we have here a clear and inconteſtable proof, if the apoſtle's way of arguing be juſt, that he is too, and ought to be, the Lord or Soveriegn of the world.

There is but one way of anſwering this, which our adverſaries find themſelves under a neceſſity, weak as it is, of taking refuge in. They pretend, that the Son created the world only as God's miniſter, and wholly by his direction and appointment. Now tho' there is not ſo great an impropriety, according to the natural and common forms of ſpeaking, in a man's attributing what he does by order of any perſon to his own action, as in ſtyling himſelf by the proper name or title of ſuch a perſon; yet, to mention none of thoſe texts which attribute the creation of the world to the Son abſolutely, and as his proper and perſonal act, this anſwer cannot be of any force or ſignificancy, for another plain and evident reaſon. It being expreſly declar'd in ſcripture, that all things were not only created by the Son, but *for him*; that he is *alpha* and *omega*, the firſt and the laſt; not only the efficient cauſe, but intentionally the great end of all things.

Now tho' a miniſter ſhould call what he does, by virtue of the powers veſted in him, his own proper act; ſhould we farther allow, that he might even aſſume the name and title of the Prince, whoſe miniſter he is; yet to ſay, that his great or primary end is to act for himſelf, or his own glory, is to give us ſuch an idea of his conduct, as at once deſtroys both his relation and his fidelity under that character. I need not deſcend to illuſtrate, what is ſo very obvious in the application.

2. Christ is ſtyl'd *Lord*, and more peculiarly *our Lord*, as chriſtians, by virtue of the general redemption of mankind made by him. In regard to which deſign of his, St. *John Baptiſt*, his forerunner, open'd his miniſtry with exhorting the Jews to *prepare the way of the Lord*; and accordingly it was prophetically repreſented by *Zechariah*, as his peculiar office, *to go before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways.* And tho' he might juſtly be ſtyl'd Lord, as our lawgiver; yet that which conſtitutes our more peculiar relation to him, and ſtill gives him a farther propriety in us, is founded in the merits of his death, and the atonement made by it. For *we are bought with a price*; he has now acquir'd a freſh and federal right of dominion over us. And how this acquiſition was made, and upon what valuable conſideration, the ſcriptures elſewhere expreſſly inform us. For *we were not redeem'd with corruptible things, ſuch as ſilver or gold; but with the precious blood of Jeſus Chriſt.* We are told in another place, that in conſequence of his humiliation and death, *God highly exalted him, and gave him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jeſus every knew ſhould bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue ſhould confeſs,* * *that Jeſus Chriſt is Lord, to the glory of God the Father* †. Himſelf declares, after his reſurrection, to the apoſtles, that *all power in heaven and earth is committed to him.* In conformity to which declaration, St. *Paul* argues in his epiſtle to the *Romans*; *To this end, Chriſt both dy'd, aroſe, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living* ‡. But I need not multiply texts to ſhew, that *Lord* is the ordinary, the diſtinguiſhing, and proper title of *Chriſt*, throughout the New Teſtament; or for what reaſon God hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be head over all things to his church. This character, indeed, is ſo peculiar to *Chriſt*, that he it ſtyl'd *one Lord*, in oppoſition to

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* Ὅτι Κύριος ὁ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν, &c.

† *Phil.* 2. 9, 10, 11.

‡ *Rom.* 14. 9.

all other lords, and in the ſame ſenſe as the Father is ſaid to be one God. *To us*, ſays the apoſtle, *there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things; and one Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom are all things, and we by him* [*]. Not that the Son is here call'd one Lord, in oppoſition to the ſupreme power and dominion of the Father, any more than the Father is ſtyl'd one God, in oppoſition to the divinity of the Son; but they are ſo differently ſtyl'd on account of their perſonal and more peculiar characters, in oppoſition to lords many, and gods many; which were not, in truth, but only nominally ſo call'd, and in an improper ſenſe.

There appears, however, no neceſſity, becauſe to us there is but *one Lord*, that conſequently no perſons can be inveſted with any authority in his kingdom (where he does not viſibly interpoſe) in order the better to maintain the peace, diſcipline, or other intereſts of it. In other caſes, it is not thought derogatory to the honour or power of the ſovereign, that perſons ſhould act in an authoritative manner, tho' in his abſence, by commiſſion from him. Why then ſhould it be thought, in the nature of the thing, impracticable, that *Chriſt* ſhould depute perſons to act in his kingdom, or church, ſo far eſpecially as concerns the external polity, or order of it? If other reaſons could poſſibly be aſſign'd againſt ſuch a deputed power from *Chriſt*, now in heaven, and not interpoſing in the government of his ſubjects after a viſible manner; yet certainly this can be no reaſon of itſelf againſt ſuch a power, that he is ſole Lord, or Law-giver in his church. For if this reaſon ſimply, or by the mere force of it, prove any thing, it will prove undeniably, that there ought to be no civil authoritative adminiſtration exercis'd under *Chriſt*, who is *Lord of all*; and to whom all things, whether *of things in heaven, or things in earth*, are made ſubject. Nay, *Chriſt*, conſider'd ſtrictly as creator, has an equal right to be ſole ruler in the kingdom of men, as *Chriſt* the redeemer, to be ſole ruler in his church, or ſpiritual kingdom. I do not here examine, I ſay, what other arguments may lie, tho' none of ſufficient force have as yet appear'd to lie againſt this principle, that *Chriſt* may depute perſons to act in a judicial authoritative manner under him in his church: I only infer, if it be a good argument to the contrary, that *Chriſt* is ſole Lord or Law-giver in his church, it is a neceſſary conſequence, that the civil magiſtrate cannot, without uſurping on his authority, as he is the creator and governor of mankind in general, exerciſe any proper or judicial act of authority in the ſtate.

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[*] 1 *Cor.* 8. 6.

FOR *Chriſt* is King himſelf, and equally King in both reſpects, and is therefore in both as much ſole governor. So that the conſequence, from his being ſole governor, muſt hold equally and indifferently good with reſpect to the adminiſtration of either kingdom. Tho' as perſons indeed, who participate the benefits of his ſacrifice, which was made for all mankind, and eſpecially as chriſtians, and profeſs'd members of his church, he is our *Lord*, by a more peculiar relation, and ſtricter propriety of dominion over us; and which brings us ſtill under new, and more powerful engagements of obedience to them. He made us, and not we our ſelves; he preſerves us in being; and all the bleſſings we enjoy, are the effects of his goodneſs, whether *pertaining to life or godlineſs*. For, even in our natural ſtate, he did not leave us without good and wholſome rules for our conduct. Yet, conſider'd as our redeemer, he is the *Prince of life*, ſtill in a more ſublime ſenſe; even the *Lord of glory*. And, if we live in a faithful and conſcientious obedience to his laws, will, in his due time, tranſlate us too to a ſtate of glory, that *where he is, there we may be alſo*. Which ſhould be an invincible motive to us to obſerve the apoſtle's exhortation, wherewith I ſhall conclude this article, that *what we do, we ſhould do it heartily, as to the* Lord, *and not unto men; knowing that of the* Lord *we ſhall receive the reward of the inheritance; for we ſerve the* Lord Chriſt *.

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* Coloſſ. 3. 23, 24.

Of the CREED.

Article III.

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt, born of the Virgin Mary.

Chap. I.

Who was conceived.

IT is evident from the relative in the front of this article, and which connects it with the former, that we are to underſtand and explain it concerning the ſame Perſon, who was the ſubject of the laſt article. He, whom we have confeſs'd and prov'd to be, in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe, the Son of God, was, in order to accompliſh the great work of our redemption, at the time pre-determin'd by his Father, to become incarnate, and take upon him the nature of man. But there being ſome difficulty in apprehending how the human nature could be aſſum'd into a perſonal union with the divine, to prevent any ſuſpicion, that he, who was the Son of God, was not alſo, in truth, the Son of man; two material circumſtances, the the one of his conception, the other of his birth, are particularly recogniz'd in the creed. Notwithſtanding which precaution, there were hereticks who early aſſerted, that *Jeſus Chriſt* was not truly man, but only in outward appearance; and that his body, with the ſeveral actions of it, conſider'd as a human body, were altogether viſionary and ſuppoſititious.

There have been alſo ſome modern enthuſiaſts, who pretended that the body of *Chriſt* was not produc'd in the womb of his mother by any immediate operation of a divine power: But the Holy

Ghoſt brought a body of a more pure and refin'd nature from heaven, which he caus'd to paſs through that of the holy virgin, without any proper or vital communication with it. In oppoſition both to the former hereſy, which too much prevail'd in the primitive ages of the church, and to this propagated by certain phanaticks about the time of the Reformation; we need only recite the expreſs words of the holy ſcriptures to thoſe who believe the divine authority of them.

It is ſaid in thoſe ſacred oracles, that *the ſeed of the woman ſhall break the ſerpent's head* *; that *God ſent forth his Son made of a woman* †; that *he took on him the ſeed of Abraham* ‡; and *was made of the ſeed of David, according to the fleſh* **; *of whom, as concerning the fleſh, Chriſt came* ††. All which paſſages are ſo full in proof of our Lord's humanity, ſo far as it relates to his aſſuming a human and real body, which is the only ſubject of our preſent enquiry, that no forms of ſpeech could have been contriv'd more directly to aſſert it. But it is ordinary for men, in the heat of their zeal, and eſpecially in the infancy of their converſion, while they oppoſe an error which has been openly diſclaim'd by them, to run into ſome error equally groundleſs, or perhaps more impious, on the other hand. This, when the Reformation firſt began to ſpread itſelf in *Germany*, was particularly the caſe of ſome perſons there; who, having more zeal than knowledge, and obſerving, that in the communion from which they had ſeparated, a greater part of the publick worſhip was addreſs'd to the Virgin-mother, than to the Son; and that men honour'd her, in many reſpects, even as they honour'd the Father, in deteſtation of an idolatrous practice, ſo injurious both to the Father and the Son, they deny'd her that ſhare and propriety, which, as a Mother, ſhe had, and ought to have had, in the conception and birth of *Chriſt*.

It is owing to the ſame origin, that other weak, tho' perhaps well-meaning perſons, having conceiv'd a juſt indignation at the many ſuperſtitious rites and ceremonies of the church of *Rome*, which had contributed ſo much to deſtroy the very vitals of religion, and to make it, in common apprehenſion, principally to conſiſt in outward pomp and addreſs, took an occaſion thereby of declaiming againſt all ceremonies in general, as inconſiſtent with that pure and ſpiritual worſhip, which is more peculiar to the chriſtian diſpenſation, and wherein one diſtinguiſhing character of it conſiſts.

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* *Gen.* 3. 15. † *Gal.* 4. 4. ‡ *Heb.* 2. 16. ** *Rom.* 1. 3. †† *Rom.* 9. 5.

In oppoſition again to certain uſurp'd powers and temporal emoluments of the Clergy, whereof they were at that time poſſeſs'd; and which they claim'd as juſtly due to them, others were ſo far carry'd away by their prejudice, on that account, againſt them, that they were even for deſtroying their true, ſtated, and original rights; and eſpecially, for aboliſhing the Epiſcopate, as being the ſuperior order, and inveſted, for that reaſon, with higher, and more extenſive powers: Under colour of which, perſons of this character had taken occaſion, and in too many and flagrant inſtances, to lord it over God's heritage, and to treat thoſe under their adminiſtration, even *as having dominion over their faith*.

It is from this falſe way of reaſoning, which puts no diſtinction between a juſt claim to the ſacerdotal powers, and the actual, or perhaps poſſible abuſe of them, to the prejudice of civil ſociety, that ſome men are of opinion, the Clergy neither have, nor ought to have, properly ſpeaking, any authority at all, tho' in things merely relating to conſcience and religion. And 'tis no wonder, that perſons, who maintain ſuch principles, ſhould farther aſſert, in conformity to them, and by ſo obvious and natural a conſequence, that it is in vain to talk of a regular and uninterrupted ſucceſſion of the Clergy; and of the nullity or validity of God's ordinances, upon account of ſuch niceties and trifles. How far they are ſo, will be more particularly conſider'd in another place; I ſhall only here obſerve, that if there be no regular, or uninterrupted ſucceſſion of the Clergy from *Chriſt*; then, after the chain of that ſucceſſion, which continued for ſome time after chriſtianity was planted in the world, was once broken, except *Chriſt* had interpos'd by an immediate power, which will not be pretended, towards authorizing a peculiar order of men to miniſter in things pertaining to God; from that time, the appointment of all perſons to the ſacred office, of what denomination ſoever, eſpecially if they have been commiſſion'd to that end by the ſtate, will be equally regular and authentick. Where there is no divine authority from *Chriſt* to commiſſion perſons for the work of the miniſtry; what can be more evident, than that their commiſſion muſt depend upon mere human authority; and, if ſo, there can be no particular kind of ordination, but what is mutable, and will be ſo to the end of the world, at the diſcretion of men, which is of more ſignificancy or importance to this end, than any other kind.

A doctrine, which, inſtead of conſulting the honour, dignity, or prerogative of *Chriſt*, as ſole King in his Kingdom, is calculated to juſtify an invaſion upon his regal authority, in the higheſt and moſt neceſſary act of it, that of deputing the principal miniſters of his Kingdom to ſerve under him by his own commiſſion.

Having thus aſſerted the conception of *Chriſt*, ſo far as is neceſſary to eſtabliſh our belief concerning the verity of his human body; and withal made theſe occaſional reflections on too common a practice of men, who, to avoid an error on one hand, precipitate themſelves into as great or perhaps more dangerous an error, on the other; I proceed to a more diſtinct explication of the remaining part of the article; and which eſpecially relates, when we conſider the conception of *Chriſt*, to the more immediate act and power of the Holy Ghoſt.

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Chap. II.

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt.

THAT I may explain this branch of the article, not only with reſpect to the doctrine here expreſſly aſſerted; but to certain other doctrines, which have a natural or obvious connexion with it; I ſhall proceed, in treating of it, upon theſe following enquiries.

I. What we profeſs to believe in ſaying, that *Chriſt* was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt.

II. Why he was conceived after ſo extraordinary a manner.

III. Upon what account the union of the two natures in him was neceſſary.

IV. How the union of the two natures was ſo made, as to conſtitute but one perſon.

I. What we profeſs to believe in ſaying, *Chriſt* was conceiv'd by the Holy Ghoſt. As the conception of this great and glorious Perſon was not in the ordinary way of generation, but by a ſpecial and immediate power of the third Perſon (as we ſhall afterwards prove him to be) in the ever bleſſed and glorious Trinity, the manner of whoſe action we are not capable of comprehending; it does not become us to be too curious, or to give our imaginations too free a ſcope in our enquiries concerning it. The prophet therefore might, even in this reſpect, have put it as an unanſwerable problem with reſpect to *Chriſt*: *Who can declare his generation?* Who can pretend to ſhew, from any natural principles, how his body was, or could be, in the origin of it, form'd; or how the ſeminal powers of life in it firſt began, out of the ordinary courſe of nature, to operate and unfold themſelves? It is ſufficient to anſwer, and all we can anſwer upon any good or reaſonable grounds in the caſe, that God is not limited in his action by the general order of things, which he has eſtabliſh'd; that the ſame power which originally made man out of the duſt of the earth, and afterwards woman from one of his bones, can, with equal facility, produce a human body, without the concurrence of what himſelf has, in all other caſes, made abſolutely neceſſary towards the production of it. The power of God anſwers all objections, which do not, in the reaſon of the thing objected, imply an impoſſibility. And what indeed can be more reaſonable, than that the author of nature, who gave it thoſe laws by which it acts, ſhould reſerve to himſelf the prerogative, eſpecially upon extraordinary occaſions, of diſpenſing with them at pleaſure; and cauſe them to act, if, after all, any action can properly be aſcrib'd to them, after what manner, or to what ends and purpoſes he thinks fit.

SOME learned men of the church of *Rome* have indeed carry'd their diſquiſitions, upon this article, farther than conſiſted with that profound reverence, which was owing to the action of God in ſo extraordinary an inſtance. But as the writers of that church, eſpecially the caſuiſts, have been very ingenious in putting nice and curious queſtions upon ſuch ſubjects, as rather tend to gratify a corrupt imagination, than to enlighten the mind; it is leſs matter of ſurprize, if, on certain occaſions, they have treated even concerning ſome of the moſt ſacred and awful ſubjects, with that view, and indulg'd themſelves in ſuch incidental reflections, as are not to be ſtrictly examin'd by the ordinary rules of decency.

As the ſcriptures ſpeak of our Saviour's conception in the moſt ſimple and natural terms, and withal moſt agreeable to the dignity and purity of the divine nature, let us not affect to be wiſe above what is written, or purſue a point, which might poſſibly admit of many nice ſpeculations, farther, than may be neceſſary to give us ſome intelligible notion, at leaſt, of the nature and poſſibility of the thing in general, which we profeſs to believe.

To which end, indeed, it ſeems requiſite, and withal ſufficient for us to conclude, that by virtue of a power of the Holy Ghoſt, which ſupply'd the ordinary method of generation, the holy Virgin conceiv'd our bleſſed Saviour in her womb, and of her ſubſtance; which render'd her properly, and in the natural and moſt ſtrict ſenſe of the word, his mother. For tho' the conception of our Lord is here expreſſly attributed to the Holy Ghoſt, without the leaſt mention of the holy Virgin's concurrence, in any reſpect, towards it; yet we are not to ſuppoſe her excluded from having that ſhare in it, which is proper, in like caſes, to mothers; and therefore the perſonal action of the mother is alſo neceſſarily ſuppos'd in his conception, not only from the reaſon of the thing, but the expreſs words of that prophecy, *Thou ſhalt conceive and bear a ſon* [*].

BUT however, the Holy Ghoſt concurr'd by a ſpecial and immediate act of his power, towards the conception of *Chriſt*; we are not to ſuppoſe that he concurr'd by way of a [†] material agent, or by any communication of his ſubſtance, but purely as an efficient agent, or operative power of God. So that, notwithſtanding *Chriſt* was conceiv'd by the Holy Ghoſt; yet the Holy Ghoſt could not properly be ſtyl'd the Father of *Chriſt*. Nay, *Chriſt* was not the Son of God the Father, with reſpect to his temporal generation, how miraculous ſo ever, in a proper ſenſe, any more than *Adam*, who is expreſſly call'd the Son of God [‡], could be call'd ſo, from his being form'd by the immediate action of God, out of the duſt.

THE Socinians indeed, not being able, upon their principles, otherways to account for the character of the only begotten Son, ſo ordinarily aſcrib'd to our Saviour in the holy ſcriptures, have pretended this title was given him, becauſe in his conception, one part whereof his body was form'd, was taken from the ſubſtance of his mother; the other part was compos'd by the divine power, of foreign matter. In the former reſpect, they ſay, he was the ſon of man; in the latter, the Son of God.

THIS notion, which is advanc'd to ſerve an hypotheſis not otherways tenable, is not only of itſelf precarious, but of no conſequence to prove what is deſign'd by it, were it really ſupported by any good or ſufficient reaſons. For, ſuppoſing it true, *Chriſt*, in being produc'd by the immediate power of the Holy Ghoſt, would be, in a ſtricter ſenſe, the only begotten of the Holy Ghoſt (which the Socinians will not admit) than of God the Father. Secondly, the matter, which was ſuperadded by the Holy

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[*] Conſequently *(as Biſhop* Pearſon *argues)* no more is left to be attributed to the Spirit, than what is neceſſary to cauſe the Virgin to perform the actions of a mother. When the ſcripture ſpeaketh of regeneration, or the ſecond birth, it denyeth all which belongeth to natural procreation, deſcribing *the Sons of God, as begotten not of bloods, nor of the will of the fleſh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And in the incarnation of our Saviour, we remove all will, or luſt of the fleſh.* We deny all will of man concurring. But as the *bloods*, in the language of the *Hebrews*, did ſignify that ſubſtance, of which the fleſh was form'd in the womb; ſo we acknowledge, in the generation of *Jeſus Chriſt*, that he was made of the ſubſtance of his mother. *p.* 166.

[†] St. *Ambroſe* expreſſes himſelf on this occaſion in very clear terms, and to the ſame effect: *Quod ex aliquo eſt, aut ex ſubſtantiâ, aut ex poteſtate ejus eſt. Ex ſubſtantiâ, ſicut Filius, qui à Patre eſt. Ex poteſtate, ſicut ex Deo omnia. Quo modo in utero habuit Maria ex Spiritu Sancto.*

[‡] *Luke* 3. 38.

Ghoſt towards forming the body of *Chriſt*, no more proves *Chriſt* to have been the Son of God, in that high ſenſe, which the Socinians find themſelves under a neceſſity of admitting, than it proves our firſt parent to have been the Son of God, in the ſame ſenſe; becauſe he was originally form'd, as we have before obſerv'd, by the immediate power of God. In the laſt place, *Chriſt*, who is ſaid to have been like to us in all things, *ſin only excepted*, upon ſuppoſition that his body was compos'd of two parts (the one of celeſtial, or any foreign matter whatever, the other of his mother's ſubſtance) would be in part like us, with reſpect to the matter of our bodies, and in part unlike us; and therefore could not, as the Holy Ghoſt in ſcripture aſſerts, be made like unto us, *ſin only excepted.* But I proceed, under a diſtinct ſection, to my ſecond enquiry.

Sect. II.

Why our Saviour was conceiv'd after ſo extraordinary a manner?

THE principal reaſon which divines have aſſign'd for the conception of *Chriſt*, beſides the ordinary courſe of nature, by the power of the Holy Ghoſt, is, that he might be ſanctify'd, in a ſpecial manner, to the offices to which he was appointed, and which requir'd, eſpecially his ſacerdotal office, that he ſhould be perfectly free from ſin, and conſequently, from thoſe ſtrong and natural motions of concupiſcence, whereby men are uſually carry'd away to commit ſin. If it be pretended, that, on ſuppoſition the body of *Chriſt* had been generated in the ordinary way, he might, as the ſcriptures record of other holy perſons, have been ſanctify'd in the womb: And ſo the effects of that concupiſcence and diſorder, common to the reſt of mankind had been prevented, as to his particular perſon; it may be anſwer'd, that the ſanctification here referr'd to, of other holy men, did not denote their perfect freedom from ſin, or the natural propenſions to it, which men, in general, are ſubject to; but ſome peculiar deſignation of their perſons to certain ſacred offices, and to the end they might miniſter in things pertaining to God, by virtue of a more immediate and ſpiritual relation to him.

We do not diſpute, whether God could not, by an Almighty power, have prevented any latent diſorder, or defect, which, according to the common courſe of generation, had poſſibly been incident to the body of *Chriſt*; but as God always effects his deſigns by the moſt ſimple means, and without having recourſe to a greater power than is neceſſary to effect them; as all the ends of the incarnation of *Chriſt*, conſider'd as the ſon of *Abraham* and *David*, were anſwer'd by his being born of the holy Virgin; and as it tended to give us a greater idea of the dignity of his perſon, that he was ſo born; we conclude it upon theſe ſeveral accounts, moſt reaſonable and agreeable to the wiſdom of the divine conduct, that he ſhould have been ſo born.

If original ſin conſiſts, as we have before obſerv'd, in that ſtrong and natural propenſion to ſin, which we all derive from our firſt parent, by occaſion of that diſorder, which, in conſequence of his tranſgreſſion, happen'd in his body, it is reaſonable to conclude, the effects of that diſorder will be leſs ſenſible and malignant, the farther any generation is remov'd from the ordinary method of tranſmitting them.

We may alſo probably ſuppoſe, beſides other reaſons reſpecting the ſacredneſs and dignity of the divine action, that the bleſſed Virgin was deſign'd for this peculiar honour of conceiving *Chriſt*, on the account of her diſtinguiſhing graces, both perhaps of body and mind, and the natural conſequences of them, towards the better and more perfect conformation of his ſacred body.

Do not we continually obſerve the ill qualities, which parents tranſmit to their children, not only with reſpect to an ill ſtate of body, but an ill temper of mind too, which generally indeed follows the diſpoſition, or mechaniſm, ſhall I call it, of the body, and is often diſcoverable even from the exterior form and ſignatures of it. We may as reaſonably ſuppoſe, that pious, regular, and virtuous parents, other circumſtances being equal, ſhould tranſmit ſuch a happy conſtitution of body to their children, as, by a natural effect of the laws of union, between the two different ſubſtances, whereof they are compos'd, may render them more ſuſceptible of good and religious impreſſions.

For theſe reaſons, we may piouſly infer, that *Chriſt* was not only conceiv'd after ſo extraordinary a manner, but in particular by the bleſſed Virgin, and of her ſole and proper ſubſtance. For, however God may effect his deſigns by immediate acts of his will, without the concurrence of any natural means; yet as he can make nature, in many caſes, ſubſervient to the ends of grace, ſo far as natural means may conduce to thoſe ends, it is agreeable to his wiſdom, that he ſhould accordingly make uſe of them.

Whether therefore we underſtand by original ſin, the actual corruption of man's nature, formally conſider'd as ſin, or his natural propenſion to ſin, ariſing from the irregular ſtate of his body ſince the fall, and which the ſcriptures expreſs by the name of concupiſcence; it was highly agreeable to the divine wiſdom, and congruous in the reaſon of the thing, that, to prevent the guilt, or malignant effects of it, *Chriſt* ſhould have been conceiv'd in the manner he was conceiv'd.

Tho' indeed there ſeems this inconvenience to lie againſt the doctrine of original ſin, if it ſuppoſe the corruption of man's nature ſuch, as really to conſtitute him a ſinner, that the formal nature of ſin does not lie in any diſorder of the body, but wholly in the diſorder of the mind. However, therefore, we may ſuppoſe the body, as to the proper ſtate of it, diſpos'd or vitiated, by reaſon of any undue fermentation of the blood, or ſome other phyſical cauſe; yet till the mind actually conſents to the irregular paſſions or appetites of it, it is not ſtrictly chargeable with the guilt of ſin, becauſe it will ſtill retain a power of not conſenting to them; or if it have no ſuch power, then its conſent (which would deſtroy the very nature and formal notion of ſin) is not voluntary, but the plain effect of neceſſity. It can only be ſaid then, in order to give us any diſtinct notion how original ſin, conſider'd formally as ſin, is conveyed, that the ſoul, as well as the body, is deriv'd from our firſt parents, and generated after the ſame manner that flame is communicable from one lamp or candle to another. But this is a notion ſo generally exploded, and upon ſo juſt grounds, from the ſimplicity and indiviſibility of a pure uncompounded ſubſtance, that I ſhall not inſiſt in confutation of it. And yet if the ſoul be not ſo traduc'd, but immediately created by God, it is impoſſible to apprehend how it ſhould receive any contamination, which ſhould render it obnoxious to the wrath of God, from its union to a body, to whoſe motions it cannot give any criminal conſent, and which it never ſo much as conſented to be united with.

A celebrated philoſopher, finding the common notion concerning original ſin, not eaſily reconcileable with the juſtice of God, as it renders infants, before they are capable of actual ſin, objects of the divine diſpleaſure, has produc'd an argument for it, from the idea of his infinite wiſdom and holineſs. God, ſays he, as infinitely wiſe, acts by the moſt ſimple laws, and as infinitely holy, and a lover of order, neceſſarily hates all diſorder, wherever he ſees it. Now, in the natural courſe of things, the ſoul, by reaſon of its union with a diſorder'd body, being turn'd; or having at leaſt, upon that account, a ſtrong tendency to turn itſelf from God towards the creature, he is not oblig'd to interpoſe by an immediate and miraculous power to prevent the natural effects of this union; and ſince his mind always repreſents things to him as they really are, ſeeing infants in a ſtate of diſorder, he cannot but judge them to be ſo; and, in conſequence of his judgment, as he is infinitely holy, they muſt neceſſarily be the objects of his diſlike and averſion.

This ſeems the moſt ſpecious account that can be given of the opinion which ſubjects children, by reaſon of original ſin, to the wrath and diſpleaſure of Almighty God. And, it muſt be confeſs'd, in the firſt place, if we were only to conſult the idea of God's wiſdom and holineſs, without regard to his juſtice or goodneſs, there might be ſome reaſonable foundation for what is here advanc'd. But as a wiſe and holy God can do nothing irreconcileable with the character of a juſt and good God, and it is directly contrary to all our notions, both of goodneſs and juſtice, that any creature ſhould be treated as criminal, upon the charge of a crime, which it has not, in fact, committed; and when it cannot be ſuppos'd, by any reaſonable implication, that it ever ſo much as virtually conſented to. All the attributes of God are attended with an idea of infinite perfection. But we ought not, we cannot for that very reaſon, if we attend to it, in honour to one of them, detract from the perfection of another. According to our natural way of conceiving things, it ſeems that the wiſdom and holineſs of God ſhould rather, upon a competition (could that poſſibly be imagin'd) with his juſtice or goodneſs, give way to them, than that theſe attributes, or either of them, ſhould be ſacrific'd to his juſtice or holineſs: Becauſe, in this caſe, there is a viſible injury done to his creatures, as well as to two of the eſſential perfections of his nature, and whereby he is pleas'd, in ſo peculiar a manner, to diſtinguiſh himſelf in the holy ſcriptures. In the latter caſe, the injury, if we ſtill argue upon an impoſſible ſuppoſition, would wholly terminate in the divine being himſelf.

It is farther ſuppos'd here, that God ſees the ſoul of an infant new born, or perhaps in the womb, in a ſtate of diſorder, by reaſon of its being united to a body, that draws it off from him towards ſenſible objects, and gives it certain irregular motions that juſtly render it liable to puniſhment. But this is a precarious way of arguing: For God either ſees the ſoul of ſuch an infant in an actual ſtate of diſorder, or only conſequentially ſo. If he really ſee it in an actual and irregular motion towards the creature, this, we grant, may be a juſt occaſion of his withdrawing thoſe favours from it, which otherways he might and would perhaps have conferr'd.

ferr'd. God, by ſuch a conduct, does the infant no injury, nor gives it the leaſt reaſon to complain.

This is only a negative way of expreſſing his diſpleaſure, whereby his juſtice is not at all affected. What we think ſo irreconcileable with this attribute, is, that, ſuppoſing the ſoul of ſuch an infant actually in a ſtate of diſorder; yet as it is brought into ſuch a ſtate, not by any antecedent volition or fault of itſelf, God cannot, with the ſafety of his juſtice, inflict any poſitive puniſhment, or any evil, conſider'd properly as a puniſhment, upon it. If God only ſee it in a conſequential ſtate of diſorder, it will be ſtill more difficult to aſſign the reaſons either of his withdrawing any favour from it, or his inflicting any puniſhment upon it; becauſe, in this caſe, it may poſſibly, by a good uſe of its liberty, in concurrence with the common grace of God, prevent the ordinary effects of concupiſcence. Or if they be ſuch, as cannot poſſibly be prevented, how can we reconcile it with the juſtice or goodneſs of God, that he ſhould puniſh a poor impotent creature for not doing what was, in the nature of the thing, impoſſible to be done: Nay, whoſe very foreſeen endeavour to conquer the natural motions of concupiſcence afterwards, ſhould rather, one would hope from the goodneſs of God, be a means of recommending it to his more ſpecial favour.

I would not pretend, after all, to produce any reaſons againſt the plain and expreſs authorities of ſcripture, if they really ſhould prove ſo, which are alledg'd to ſhew, that original ſin actually renders infants liable to the wrath of God. It may not, however, be improper to examine, in a few words, the force of two or three texts, upon which the greateſt ſtreſs, as to this argument, is commonly laid.

The words of the pſalmiſt are often cited to this purpoſe: *Behold I was ſhapen in iniquity, and in ſin hath my mother conceived me*[*]. But it is obſervable,

1. That *David* does not here ſay, he was born in ſin, which render'd him obnoxious to the wrath and vengeance of God; neither is there any neceſſity why the ſin and wickedneſs here mention'd, ſhould not rather be underſtood of the actual ſin of his mother, than of any original ſin, conſider'd properly as ſuch, in himſelf. *In ſin hath my mother conceiv'd me*; that is, I was conceived by a ſinner, or by a woman ſubject to the common paſſions and infirmities of human nature[†].

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[*] *Pſalm* 51. 7.

[†] *Quidam intelligunt hunc verſum de actuali parentum libidine, in actu matrimonii.* Vid. Pol. in Loc.

2. *David* does not here derive his ſin, if we are to conſider it as his ſin, from *Adam*, but from one of his immediate parents. He ſpeaks only of his perſonal corruption, not concerning the corruption of mankind in common. He ſpeaks more particularly in excuſe of the ſin which he had committed, and which the reaſon here inſinuated for his being betray'd more eaſily into it, might, in ſome meaſure, tend to alleviate the guilt of it. If by his being conceiv'd in ſin, we were to underſtand his being originally from his conception a ſinner, this would be to charge the ſin he had committed, and for which he was now humbling himſelf before God, not ſo much upon himſelf as a voluntary act, but upon God, as the effect of ſome natural and invincible neceſſity; than which, there cannot be a more juſt or reaſonable excuſe for any action.

The words of the Jews to the blind man, who was reſtor'd to his ſight, are alſo urg'd to ſupport the ſame doctrine: *Art thou born in ſin, and doſt thou teach us?* But they are far from concluding what they are brought in proof of: For if original ſin be here intended, it is plain this argument againſt the man's teaching, upon whom the cure was wrought, had not been peculiar to him, but which quite deſtroys the force of the interrogation, would lie againſt teaching in general.

It may probably therefore be ſuppoſed, they referr'd to a notion, at that time receiv'd by many of the Jews, concerning the preexiſtence of ſouls, in which ſtate ſome might have been greater offenders than others, and ſo incurr'd the wrath and juſt vengeance of God in a more provoking manner. Upon this principle, indeed, the particular exception againſt this man's teaching, had, we allow, a particular force and ſignificancy in it. And that they argued upon this principle, farther appears from that other queſtion; *Hath this man ſinn'd, or his parents?* Which cannot refer to original ſin, (that muſt be granted to be here out of the queſtion) and muſt therefore be underſtood concerning ſome actual ſin, or ſins, which he, who was ſo miraculouſly reſtor'd to ſight, had been guilty of in a former ſtate.

It is objected to us again, that men are ſaid by the apoſtle to have been *by nature children of wrath.* But if he had intended, that original ſin renders men juſtly obnoxious to puniſhment, he would not have ſaid *we were*, but *we are by nature children of wrath.* It is evident he is there oppoſing the ſtate of the *Epheſians* at that time, to the corrupt ſtate, wherein they liv'd before their converſion, not that wherein they were born: For this reaſon, he charges them with the actual commiſſion of ſeveral ſins in their unregenerate ſtate, which they are now freed at once from the power, and from the puniſhment of. If then the apoſtle here means that they were children of wrath, antecedently to their committing any actual ſin, the ſins which he charges upon them, as the cauſes of God's wrath, were not according to the tenour of his argument, in truth, the cauſes of it, but mention'd without any proper relation to his principal deſign. Beſides, there is no neceſſity that the word which we render *by nature*, ſhould import the original, but only the real or true ſtate of things. As when the ſame apoſtle charges the *Galatians* * with ſerving *thoſe, who were by nature no gods*, he plainly intends thoſe idols, which were only nominally, and not, in truth, gods.

In anſwer to that text from the book of *Job*; *Who ſhall give a clean thing out of an unclean?* So often cited to ſhew, that original ſin has formally the guilt and demerit of ſin, we ſay, no argument can be drawn from theſe words to that end, becauſe they do not appear, in the natural deſign of them, to be ſpoken of any moral, but rather in reference to the natural imperfections of men, eſpecially upon a compariſon of the beſt and moſt holy men, with the infinite purity and holineſs of God. With reſpect to which, the angels are *charg'd with folly*, and *the heavens* are ſaid *not to be clean in his ſight*. Or the words may be explain'd to ſignify, that God alone, by his power of forgiving ſin, can reſtore a ſinner to that pure and holy ſtate he was in antecedently to his corrupt ſtate, or can cleanſe him from his ſin ſo effectually, that he ſhall be reputed clean and innocent in the ſight of God, as if he had never ſinn'd. According to this ſenſe, *David* addreſſes himſelf to God in the following prayer. *Have mercy upon me, O Lord, according to the multitude of thy mercies, do away mine offences. Waſh me thoroughly from wickedneſs, and cleanſe me from my ſin.*

To theſe authorities, and ſome others which I do not think it neceſſary to mention, thoſe who contend for the doctrine of original ſin, in the calviniſtical ſenſe, add a particular reaſon to confirm it. Children, ſay they, die, and death is the wages of ſin; they muſt therefore neceſſarily be ſuppos'd ſinners; otherways they would not deſerve puniſhment. But how does it follow, that becauſe ſin deſerves death, therefore God cannot inflict death without ſin? The life of every creature depending, both as to the origin and continuance of it, on his mere grace, he may take it away when, after what manner, and on what occaſion he pleaſes. And it is not neceſſary, when the apoſtle ſays, *the wages of ſin is death*, that we ſhould underſtand by death, eſpecially when apply'd to involuntary agents, any poſitive eternal puniſhment of ſin, but only a ceſſation of the powers of life. In the former ſenſe, death, we think, cannot; tho', in the latter, it may be inflicted on innocent creatures; or, which is the ſame thing, on ſuch as are charg'd with involuntary crimes, and can only therefore be the wages of actual ſin. But the reaſon of inflicting any evil (for it cannot properly be call'd puniſhment) is, in the other reſpect, very different, as it may not only be done without injury to the infant which dies, but alſo prove a means of its being tranſlated, by death, to a future and more perfect ſtate of happineſs.

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* Ch. 4. 8.

SECT. III.

Upon what accounts the union of the two natures in Chriſt was neceſſary.

THE conception of *Chriſt*, after the manner we have declar'd, by virtue of a divine power, does not prove him to be really, or in ſtrictneſs, a divine perſon. Yet as he, whom we have demonſtrated to be, in a proper ſenſe, the Son of God, was the very perſon, who, by that means, became incarnate, and is therefore, in a proper ſenſe, alſo the ſon of man, they ſeem two queſtions naturally, and in the original grounds of them, to ariſe from his conception. 1. Why the two natures, the divine and human, were thus united in him; and, 2. Why after ſuch a manner, as to conſtitute but one perſon.

THE reſolution of the former point, depends on our conſidering *Chriſt*, as deſign'd for the office of a mediator: As one, that in order to reconcile ſinful man to God, was at once to propoſe and effect the conditions upon which God might, with the ſafety of his honour and juſtice, be reconcil'd. No man, conſider'd ſimply as man, was qualify'd for ſo high an undertaking; *for all men*, without diſtinction, *had ſinn'd, and fallen ſhort of the glory of God.* It would therefore have coſt more to redeem the ſoul of any one man, than the whole race of mankind were capable of performing. So that ſinners, if there had been no mediator, who was himſelf without ſin, could have propos'd no terms of reconciliation on their part, which either a wiſe, a juſt, or holy God could have accepted, on his part. And therefore, as to any method of reſtoring themſelves to the grace or favour of God, if no ſuch mediator had intereſted himſelf in their behalf, *they muſt have left that alone for ever.*

BUT if every man was incapable as being a ſinner, of paſſing between God and the reſt of mankind in quality of a mediator, might not an angel, by taking upon him that character, give us more reaſonable hopes of our being reconcil'd to God by virtue of his mediation? Eſpecially if God himſelf had propos'd to ſuch an angel the conditions upon which our reconciliation was to be made; and, at the ſame time, declar'd his gracious acceptance of them. For may not the offended party, without any wrong to his juſtice, if regard only be had to that, pardon the offence committed againſt him, upon what terms and conſiderations he pleaſes? Not to examine too nicely what an offended God might juſtly have done in order to the pardon of ſinners, eſpecially by right of his abſolute power and authority, it ſeem'd more agreeable to his wiſdom and goodneſs, in his deſign of redeeming mankind, to propoſe the mediation of a perſon to that end, if ſuch a one could be found, ſtill more nearly ally'd to him, than any created being whatever. This perſon was found, and only to be found, in the unity of the divine nature: And his free acceptance of that office gives us the higheſt aſſurance, we could poſſibly have had, that his mediation is at once moſt ſuitable to the dignity of God, and will have all the good and happy effects which ought, on any account, to be expected from it by man. This ſentiment concerning the merit and efficacy of *Chriſt*'s mediation, is highly agreeable to our common way of judging concerning the ſucceſs of any interceſſion made in our favour; as we naturally promiſe our ſelves a more happy iſſue of it, either from the ſuperior character of the perſon interceding, or from ſome peculiar intereſt he has in the perſon to be interceded to.

IT was highly expedient, at leaſt, if not abſolutely neceſſary, for theſe reaſons, that the mediator, who was to paſs between God and man, ſhould have been himſelf a divine perſon. It was no leſs requiſite to this end, that he ſhould have been alſo man. The very notion, indeed, of a mediator, implies one that has ſome perſonal and common intereſt in the parties between whom he mediates; that, by conſulting what is reſpectively due or proper to them, he may propoſe a more effectual method of bringing them together. *Chriſt*, by taking upon him our nature, and knowing experimentally in his own perſon whereof we are made, is naturally ſuppos'd to be more ſenſibly affected with our wants, and more powerfully inclin'd to relieve them; judging our caſe his own, as being made in all things like unto us; *for which cauſe,*

cauſe, he is not aſham'd to call men brethren; this is a ſecurity, which leaves them no room to doubt of their intereſt in him, or to fear that he will leave any thing unattempted, which it is proper for him to effect in their behalf. The author of the epiſtle to the *Hebrews* is very copious and eloquent, in repreſenting the great advantages of *Chriſt*'s taking upon him human nature, eſpecially with reſpect to his ſacerdotal office; and that both on account of the expiation which he made here upon earth, and (in reference to which I ſhall barely cite one text) of his continual interceſſion for us, at the right hand of God, in heaven, by virtue of it. *For we have not an High Prieſt, who cannot be touch'd with the feeling of our infirmities*; and are therefore encourag'd to *come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain grace, and help in time of need.*

As this mediator was to be an example both of active and paſſive obedience, particularly as he was to ſuffer by way of atonement for the ſins of men, it was moſt congruous indeed on both accounts, in the reaſon of the thing, that he ſhould have been a human perſon. Had an angel deſcended from heaven, and been render'd by many means viſible to us; yet he could not have exemplify'd ſuch duties in his conduct, as are properly human or ſocial, but only ſuch as are of a more abſtracted and ſpiritual nature. Or if he had appear'd in a human body, without being united to it after the ſame manner, or by the ſame laws of communication, which are at preſent eſtabliſh'd between our ſouls and bodies, men might have pretended that his example was altogether, conſidering the different ſtate they were in, impracticable to them. We are *men*, and not *angels*, had then been a real excuſe; as it is now a common unjuſt pretence for a leſs pure and ſtrict morality.

Neither could the ſuffering of any other being, deſign'd as an expiatory ſacrifice, unleſs united to a human body, have been proper in the nature of it to that end. *The ſoul that ſinneth, it ſhall die*, is a rule ſo far founded in the general reaſon of the thing, that every criminal ſhould at leaſt ſuffer, if not in his individual perſon, yet in a perſon of the ſame ſpecies, or common nature with him. Repreſentatives or vicarious undertakers, according to our common notions concerning them, being always of the ſame kind with thoſe they repreſent.

If, for theſe reaſons, it was not abſolutely neceſſary, it was, however, highly expedient in the nature of the thing, that he who was to reconcile ſinful man to God, by paſſing between them, ſhould himſelf have been both God and man; perfect God, and perfect man, yet not two, but one mediator. *One, not by conver-*

ſion of the Godhead into fleſh, but by taking of the manhood into God. One altogether, not by confuſion of ſubſtance, but by unity of perſon. Which leads me to my laſt enquiry.

SECT. IV.

How far this union of the two natures in Chriſt is made, ſo as to conſtitute but one perſon.

THERE had been no difficulty in conceiving, how *Chriſt* might have continued perfectly one perſon, if, with reſpect to his divine nature, he had only, as ſome hereticks have maintain'd, united himſelf to a human body, and not to a rational ſoul. Upon that principle, we might as eaſily apprehend, how the Word, or Son of God, might, after his aſſuming a Body, have continued the very ſame numerical perſon, without confounding our idea of one perſon, as how the union of a human ſoul and body conſtitutes at preſent no more than one perſon. But, beſides the reaſon before mention'd, why it was requiſite that one of the ſame nature which had ſinn'd, ſhould ſuffer by way of expiation for ſin. Beſides that, if he had not aſſum'd a human ſoul, as well as a human body, he could not have been ſaid, in any proper ſenſe, to ſuffer, or in any kind. The divine nature being confeſſedly incapable, and a body, as ſuch, however modify'd, altogether inſenſible of ſuffering: Beſides theſe arguments, I ſay, (which there is no evading the force of) for the perfect humanity of *Chriſt*, there is one, in particular, founded on an expreſs and undeniable authority of ſcripture. It is that famous text, where *Jeſus* is ſaid to have *encreas'd in wiſdom and ſtature, and in ſavour with God and man.* For his body could not be, in any proper, or rather intelligible ſenſe, the ſubject of wiſdom: And, with reſpect to his divine nature, it will be granted, that he was equally incapable of improving in wiſdom. The increaſe of his wiſdom cannot therefore, in any conceiveable manner, be otherways accounted for, than with reſpect to the gradual communications of light and grace, to his human or rational ſoul, as he grew in years*.

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* *Eraſmus* expreſſes his ſentiments excellently to this purpoſe, and on the ſame occaſion. *Deitas, per gradus quoſdam, dotes impertivit naturæ humanæ aſſumptæ; id quod Lucas bis docet; ſupra,* v. 40. *confortabatur, &c. Quod autem corroboratur, auctu quodam virium, fulciri videtur. Et hoc loco. Cùm verò tria, H. L. conjungat ſapientiam ætatem & gratiam ſicut verè profecit ætatis acceſſu, ità verè profeciſſe videtur dotium incrementis.*

NEITHER could *Jeſus*, conſider'd as God, increaſe in the favour of God, nor conſequently as God united to a body; but only in regard to his rational ſoul in a due uſe of its faculties, directing and governing the motions or appetites of the body (to ſpeak the common dialect) in a due regular manner, and perfectly conformable to the will of God.

THIS text affords us ſo full a proof of the perfect humaniy of *Chriſt*, that our adverſaries have no other way of evading it, but upon a ſuppoſition, which contradicts one of the moſt common and clear principles of natural philoſophy. It is ſaid then, and the authority too of certain ancient writers is produc'd for it, that man conſiſts of three parts; a rational ſoul or ſpirit, a ſenſitive ſoul, and a vegetative body. That the ſenſitive ſoul and vegetative body are the formal eſſential parts of man, and the rational ſoul a mere acceſſory part, by the ſpecial favour of God, which ſome would have it, is proper only to a regenerate perſon. According to this principle then, as to all the eſſential parts requiſite to the perfection of human nature, our Saviour was perfect man, without a rational ſoul, which the divine nature ſupply'd all the proper powers and functions of.

BUT upon what reaſonable grounds can it be ſaid, that the ſoul of man, which properly diſtinguiſhes him from other animals, and which they have not in common with him, ſhould not be a neceſſary conſtituent part of human nature. In what age or part of the world was it ever known, that a body was look'd upon as a human body, without a rational ſoul to inform it. Even children and idiots are only reckon'd among the ſpecies of men, as they are ſuppos'd to have rational ſouls; tho' the exerciſe of reaſon is at preſent obſtructed in them by the weakneſs and indiſpoſition of their organs; as it is in other perſons, who are acknowledg'd to have rational ſouls, when they are aſleep; becauſe their organs, which are the occaſional cauſe of communicating thoſe ideas to their minds, upon which they reaſon, are then in a ſtate of inaction. Upon this principle, there might poſſibly be a ſociety of men in the world, without any laws or government among them, but thoſe mechanical laws of motion, which obtain among the ſeveral ſorts or herds of animals; and which, if they might be ſufficient to denominate man, in an improper ſenſe, a ſocial creature, yet would deſtroy the notion of him, contrary to the judgment and practice of all mankind, as a moral agent; contrary to the ends for which he was created, God's honour and ſervice; with ſeveral other ends, for which a wiſe, or, I may add, a good God could only be ſuppos'd to create him; in a word, contrary to the very authority of the holy ſcriptures, which are pretended to favour the oppoſite doctrine, and wherein God treats with men, the worſt and moſt profligate ſinners, as reaſonable agents; and even condeſcends to appeal to them, that is, to their own reaſon and conſciences, for the equality of his proceedings towards them.

BUT perhaps I have already ſaid too much, in an argumentative way, againſt an opinion, which no man can ſeriouſly give into, without incurring a forfeiture at once of his character, both as a divine and a philoſopher. I ſhall therefore add but one text out of the epiſtle to the *Hebrews* in confutation of it, and which alone is ſufficient, were there no other arguments to the ſame effect either from reaſon or ſcripture, for ever to overthrow it. *For verily*, ſays the author of that epiſtle, where he ſpeaks concerning the particular reaſons why *Chriſt* became man, *he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the ſeed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High Prieſt in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the ſins of the people; for in that he himſelf hath ſuffer'd being tempted, he is able to ſuccour them that are tempted* *. What can be more evident, than the argument in this paſſage for our Saviour's having aſſum'd a rational ſoul, or human nature, in a true ſenſe, from the oppoſition of the ſeed of *Abraham* to the nature of angels; from the neceſſity of *Chriſt*'s being made in all things like unto his brethren; and from the very nature and end of his ſacrifice for us. Certainly there is no occaſion for any comment upon theſe words, (if men will be determin'd by the moſt plain and expreſs words of holy ſcripture) to ſhew, that *Chriſt*, who was perfect God, was alſo perfect man, *of a reaſonable ſoul, and human fleſh ſubſiſting.*

So that the great difficulty lies in what I proceed, after having premis'd this, to ſpeak to; how the divine nature of *Chriſt* was ſo united to the human nature, or to his rational ſoul, as ſtill to conſtitute, in any intelligible manner to us, but one perſon.

IT is not neceſſary that I ſhould deſcend to a formal proof of the facts, upon which this queſtion ariſes; that our Saviour is every where repreſented in ſcripture, not as two, but one *Chriſt*; that he is all along ſpoken of and addreſs'd to as one perſon. Beſides, had the mediator between God and man conſiſted of two perſons really diſtinct; his ſacrifice, with reſpect to his human nature, could not have had that merit or efficacy, as in a perſonal union with the divine nature. Theſe are truths that cannot be diſputed, and which we ought to acquieſce entirely in, tho' we might not be capable of giving any ſatisfactory account concerning the grounds or manner of this union. Whatever difficutly there may be in conceiving it, theſe are ſufficient grounds to induce our belief of it; provided ſuch a belief implies no contradiction, either directly, or by any natural conſequence; which we deny that it does, in both reſpects. On the other hand, many pious and learned men have argu'd, that this union is ſo far from being in the nature of the thing impoſſible, that an apt and obvious illuſtration may be made uſe of to bring it nearer to our thoughts. This method of rendring it more eaſy to human conception, is taken from the union of the ſoul and body of man; which, tho' conſiſting of two diſtinct, and altogether different ſubſtances, yet conſtitute but one man. It muſt be acknowledg'd, that the body, after the union of it with the ſoul, does not move or act in the ſame manner, that it would have done in a ſeparate ſtate. The ſoul, by which it is now inform'd, modifies it a thouſand different ways, and gives it quite another courſe of operations. Notwithſtanding, it preſerves all the qualities and affections proper to a body; from whence it is concluded very reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that the human nature may ſtill retain all its natural powers and properties, tho' ſo intimately united to the divine, and acting after ſuch a manner in ſubordination to it, that they both conſtitute but one individual perſon. For by reaſon of this dependence, the human nature has now, properly ſpeaking, tho' it has all the affections belonging to human nature, and acts according to all its natural powers, no diſtinct perſonal ſubſiſtence of itſelf, but is ſo united to the divine nature, that there ariſes from the union of them but one proper individual perſon. Yet it is not pretended that this argument from the union of a human body and ſoul, is in all reſpects juſt, or correſpondent to the perſonal union of the two natures in *Chriſt*. It is only to be conſider'd as an illuſtration, which, without repreſenting the manner of the thing, it is deſign'd to illuſtrate, in a full and perfect light, may tend at leaſt to give us ſome better conception, how the two natures in *Chriſt*, when united, ſtill continued, with all their diſtinct qualities and affections, the ſame; tho' but one perſon, and not two perſons; one mediator, and not two mediators, reſulted from that union. The properties of which were explain'd by the council of *Chalcedon*, against the hereſies which at that time infeſted the church, by the following diſtinctions.

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* *Heb.* 2. 16, 17, 18.

1. That this union was made ſo, as individually * to conſtitute but one perſon. This was done in direct oppoſition to the Neſtorian hereſy, (condemn'd before in the council of *Epheſus*) who aſſerted, that *Chriſt* was compos'd of two perſons; that the divine perſon,

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* Ἀδιαιρέτως.

by a continual and more immediate communication of grace, aſſiſted and ſupported him throughout the whole courſe of his life and miniſtry; but that the man *Chriſt* alone, conſider'd as having a perſonal diſtinct ſubſiſtence from the Word, was born and crucify'd; and conſequently, they would not allow the holy Virgin to be, or to be called the mother of God, but only the mother of *Chriſt*. And tho' it was objected by the Neſtorians, that this expreſſion, the mother of God, was no where found in the holy ſcriptures, the rule which we ſhould conform our ſelves to, in ſpeaking of divine and more difficult ſubjects; yet the catholicks did not think their argument of ſufficient force to oblige them to diſuſe an expreſſion, which, if not founded in the very words of any one text, yet was juſtify'd by clear and undeniable conſequence from many texts of holy ſcripture. For if the mother of *Peter* might properly be call'd the mother of him as man, by reaſon of the union of his ſoul and body; and as man principally imports an intelligent being, tho' ſhe contributed nothing towards generating the intelligent part of him; ſo the perſon of whom the holy Virgin was mother, being expreſſly ſtyl'd God, and having every divine perfection attributed to him in the holy ſcriptures, ſhe may, for the ſame reaſon, and therefore with the ſame propriety, with reſpect to the perſonal union of the divine and human nature, be ſtyl'd and conſider'd as the mother of God *.

2. THAT the union of the two natures was made without confuſion †: For if we were to conceive them ſo commix'd, as after their union, to make but one nature, our mediator, from that period, could not be either perfect God, nor perfect man, but a compounded and altogether unintelligible being, and of a diſtinct nature both from God and man; as all mix'd beings are different from thoſe principles, ſeparately conſider'd, which enter into the compoſition of them. It is alſo hereby intended, that the different affections of the divine and human nature of *Chriſt*, remain'd, after the union of them, in the ſame ſtate and condition, which was ſeverally proper to them before it. But having already ſpoken ſomething concerning this point, I ſhall here ſatisfy my ſelf with producing one text out of the holy ſcriptures, which is com-

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* The great ſchoolman has, after a very clear and ſolid manner, anſwer'd this objection of the Neſtorians. *Licèt non inveniatur expreſsè in ſcripturâ dictum, quòd beata virgo ſit mater Dei, invenitur tamen expreſsè in ſcripturâ, quòd Jeſus Chriſtus eſt verus Deus, ut Johannis ultimo. Et quòd beata virgo eſt mater Jeſu Chriſti, ut patet Matthæi primo. Unde ſequitur ex neceſſitate, ex verbis ſcripturæ, quòd ſit mater Dei. Dicitur enim Rom. 9. Quòd ex Judæis eſt ſecundùm carnem Chriſtus, qui eſt ſuper omnia benedictus in ſecula; non autem eſt ex Judæis, niſi mediante beatâ virgine. Unde ille qui eſt ſuper omnia Deus benedictus in ſecula, eſt verè natus ex beatâ virgine, ſicut ex ſuâ matre.* 3ª. p. quæſt. 35. art. 4.

† Ἀσυγχύτως.

monly alledg'd to ſupport and confirm it: And that is from the epiſtle of St. *Paul* to the *Romans*, where it is ſaid, that *Chriſt was made of the ſeed of David, according to the fleſh, and* (the ſame *Chriſt*) *declar'd to be the Son of God with power, according to the ſpirit of holineſs* *.

3. THIS diſtinction therefore naturally prepar'd the way for the next, or rather indeed of neceſſity imply'd it. That this union was made † without any change of the properties eſſential to each nature, ſo as to render thoſe properties convertible. For tho' there is a communication of names and idioms, in conſequence of the perſonal union between the two natures of *Chriſt*, ſo that the very ſame perſon that is called the Son of God, and the ſon of man, is ſaid to have been born, and to be from everlaſting; to die, and to have life in himſelf: Yet this manner of ſpeaking, which wholly ariſes from the unity of *Chriſt's* perſon, does no more ſuppoſe any change of the two natures, ſo as to render the properties of them convertible, than it ſuppoſes, that becauſe the ſame man is called tall or healthy, with reſpect to the ſtate of his body; or wiſe and learned, with reſpect to the qualities of his mind; that therefore his ſoul and body have no ſeparate or diſtinct properties, but only ſuch as may be reciprocally or indifferently attributed to them both.

THIS diſtinction was more peculiarly deſign'd againſt the hereſy of *Eutyches*, who aſſerted, that the Word was made fleſh by a true and proper converſion. So that, notwithſtanding before the union, the two natures were really diſtinct, yet there was a perfect and entire coalition of them afterwards into one.

I ſhall only obſerve againſt the poſſibility of ſuch a converſion, that it implies a direct repugnancy, in the reaſon of the thing, with reſpect to both natures. It was abſolutely impoſſible for the Godhead to be tranſmuted in this ſenſe, from the notion we neceſſarily conceive of God, as an immutable, ſimple, and unlimited being; whereas it is evident, upon this principle, he muſt have been a mutable, diviſible, and limited being, and even ſubject, as God, to the ſame common paſſions and infirmities of men. Such a converſion was no leſs impoſſible on the part of man, as it would ſuppoſe him, by parity of reaſon, a dependent, and yet an independent; a mortal, and immortal; a perfect, and yet an imperfect being; which is, in other words, to ſuppoſe him a man, and yet no man.

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* *Rom.* i. 3, 4.

† Ἀτρέπτως

SEEING then there are certain characters and paſſions belonging to *Chriſt* as man, which it is inconſiſtent with the perfections of the divine nature, that we ſhould aſcribe to him, conſider'd ſimply or ſeparately as God; ſeeing, on the other hand, there are certain characters and powers belonging to him as God, which cannot poſſibly be aſcrib'd or communicated to him, conſider'd ſimply or ſeparately as man, and yet the ſame attributes, paſſions, and powers are attributed to one and the ſame perſon. We muſt, by neceſſary conſequence, acknowledge the identity of the perſon of *Chriſt*, and, at the ſame time, the diverſity of the two natures united in that perſon.

4. THIS union was made [*] ſo as to be for ever inſeparable. That it will and ought to continue ſo long as the mediatorial office of *Chriſt* ſubſiſts, is evident from the very reaſon and nature of that office, as well as from an expreſs promiſe of God to him in this capacity, that he ſhall reign (for ſo the promiſe muſt be underſtood) *till he hath put all his enemies under his feet, aud deliver'd up the kingdom to God, even the Father.* So that the queſtion is, whether, after the expiration of his regal power as mediator, or after this ceſſion of it has been made to the Father, and when ſome of the principal reaſons, at leaſt, of his aſſuming human nature into a perſonal union with the divine, are ceas'd, that union will not alſo be diſſolv'd, and ceaſe, at the ſame time with it?

THERE ſeem to be but two ways of determining this queſtion: Either from revelation, or the reaſonableneſs of ſuppoſing, why the divine and human nature of *Chriſt* may ſtill continue united in one perſon; even tho' ſome of the ends, for which that union was originally made, and has till that time ſubſiſted, are perfectly accompliſh'd. For it will be ſufficient to our purpoſe, notwithſtanding the accompliſhment of thoſe ends, if we can aſſign any other good end or reaſon, why it ſhould ſtill ſubſiſt.

IF we conſult the holy ſcriptures upon this point, we may obſerve, that when they ſpeak concerning the future happineſs of the ſaints, they repreſent it as conſiſting in a participation of the ſame happineſs and glory with our Lord; they ſpeak of him as Lord. *We ſhall be ever with the Lord* [†]. As Chriſt; *When Chriſt, who is our life, ſhall appear, then ſhall we alſo appear with him in glory* [‡]. As Jeſus Chriſt; *That they may obtain the ſalvation, which is in Jeſus Chriſt, with eternal glory* [**]. As Lord Jeſus Chriſt; *He hath called you to the obtaining of the glory of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt* [††]. From all theſe texts, it appears, that ſo long as the ſaints ſhall continue in a ſtate of glory, the Son of God will continue the ſame perſon, and be diſtinguiſh'd by the very names and titles, whereby we know, and now confeſs him to be one perſon. Whereas, on ſuppoſition that after he has gather'd together the number of his elect, and ſo the ends of his mediatorial office ſhould, in that reſpect, ceaſe; he would not be ſeparately, either as God or man, the perſon here deſcrib'd; or rather indeed, if the divine and human nature were to have a ſeparate ſubſiſtence, he would not, contrary to what theſe texts evidently ſuppoſe and import, be one perſon, but two perſons.

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[*] Ἀχωρίστως.

[†] 1 *Theſſ.* 14. 17.

[‡] *Coll.* 3. 4.

[**] 2 *Tim.* 2. 10.

[††] 2 *Theſſ.* 2. 14.

Besides theſe teſtimonies concerning the perpetuity of the union between the two natures of *Chriſt*, I might diſtinctly cite others from the *Revelations*, where glory, honour, and worſhip are ſaid to be continually offer'd, *to him that ſitteth upon the throne, and to the lamb* (which muſt, in a more peculiar manner, refer to the human nature of *Chriſt) for ever and ever.*

Let us enquire, in the next place, whether, ſetting aſide the authority of divine revelation, as to this matter, there are not alſo ſufficient grounds, from the reaſon of the thing, to ſuppoſe, why the union of the two natures ſhould be perpetual, notwithſtanding ſome of the principal ends of it have been fully attain'd. For we may diſtinguiſh between the end for which any thing is done, and the reward conſequent to the doing of it. A great end for which the Son of God became man, was, that he might ſave penitent ſinners; this end will be perfectly effected, after the ſaints are tranſlated to heaven. One reward of his ſervice in effecting it, is, that *God has given him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jeſus every knee ſhould bow, of things in heaven, and of things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue ſhould confeſs, that Jeſus is the Chriſt, to the glory of the Father.* Now how does it follow, that becauſe one principal end for which the Word was made fleſh, is attain'd, therefore the reward ought, if not for ſome time, yet however, after a period of many ages, to be diſcontinued. If it were a reward of *Chriſt*'s obedience, that he ſhould receive this adoration, till the ſuppos'd time of his delivering up the kingdom to God, what period ſoever we aſſign for it, the reaſon of continuing that reward, except (what does by no means appear) God had, by a poſitive act of his will, limited the grant of it to ſuch a period, will ſtill and eternally hold good, for the continuance of it. Why ſhould the perſonal glory of *Chriſt* be ſuppos'd temporary or determinable, when the glory of the ſaints, owing to the merits of his mediatorial office, ſhall continue for ever. It appears rather, in the nature of the thing, reaſonable, that he who merited for the ſaints all the glory, whereof they are poſſeſs'd, ſhould himſelf poſſeſs, if that were neceſſary, a more permanent ſtate of glory, and be in this reſpect too, *anointed with the oyl of gladneſs above his fellows.*

This argument, I acknowledge, is of no force againſt thoſe, if there really are any ſuch perſons in the world, who deny the eternity of the joys of heaven to the ſaints. But I barely take the occaſion here of mentioning ſo capricious and ſingular an error, reſerving the conſideration of it to a more proper place.

I ſhall only here add another reaſon for the perpetual union of the two natures, more peculiarly reſpecting the ſtate of the bleſſed in heaven; and which ariſes from what has been cited out of the *Revelations*, concerning the glory, honour, and worſhip, which they continually offer to the lamb. It will be granted, that what he has done and merited for them, ought to be had in everlaſting remembrance. But it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, notwithſtanding the great illumination of their minds, that they will ſtill be more ſenſibly affected with all the proper motions of love, veneration, and gratitude towards him, from the viſible appearance of his human nature in union with the divine, to which, by virtue of that union, all their preſent glory and felicity is owing; and to whom therefore, as viſibly appearing to them, their worſhip and adoration is repreſented as ſo peculiarly addreſs'd.

I have enlarg'd the more upon theſe two points, both concerning the nature and the perpetuity of the hypoſtatick union; becauſe our excellent church has thought theſe doctrines of ſo great importance, that it is declar'd in her ſecond article, as *Chriſt took man's nature upon him, in the womb of the bleſſed Virgin, and of her ſubſtance; ſo theſe two natures were join'd in one perſon, never to be divided.*

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Chap. III.

Who was conceived by the Holy Ghoſt, born of the Virgin Mary.

THE mother of *Chriſt*, tho' not mention'd in the former part of the article, yet neceſſarily imply'd in it, as having perform'd what was proper to her as a mother, in the conception of *Chriſt*, is here expreſly deſcrib'd both by her name, and by a peculiar character (when we conſider her under that relation) of her perſon. Having obſerv'd what appears neceſſary, or moſt conſiderable upon theſe two particulars, I ſhall proceed, in the next place, to conſider the three principal circumſtances of the birth of *Chriſt*; the manner, the time, and the place of it.

I begin with the name of the holy Virgin, which, tho' mention'd as proper to diſtinguiſh the perſon, who really was the mother of *Chriſt*, yet, conſider'd barely as a name, does not ſeem to be of that ſingular or extraordinary importance, which ſome have imagin'd; it being a name common at that time to other perſons. And therefore, if admitted in other reſpects, or in the original deſign and etymology of it, to denote ſome peculiar excellency, yet can have no peculiar relation to the holy Virgin, conſider'd properly under that character.

SEVERAL fathers, and other learned men of diſtinction in the church, have diſcover'd, or rather have ſought to diſcover, particular reaſons for appropriating this name more eminently to the holy Virgin, from the natural ſignification of it. But there is ſo much ſcope for conjecture, and the eſſays of a fertile and lively imagination, in deriving the origin of names, ſo as to render them ſignificative of the nature or qualities of the things and perſons, to which they are apply'd, that I ſhall not enter upon a critical diſquiſition of this kind, even in reference to the name of the holy Virgin. Thoſe who have any taſte for ſuch curious entertainments, may conſult Biſhop *Pearſon*, in his marginal notes upon the place; tho' it might be proper for them to obſerve this caution, that what the good fathers have ſaid concerning the etymology of the word *Mary*, is not to be underſtood as deſign'd ſo much for an account of it, ſtrictly critical and juſt, as by way of accommodation, or ſome moral improvement to be drawn from it. So we are to underſtand St. *Bernard*, when ſpeaking of the holy Virgin, as diſtinguiſh'd by this name: * *Let us*, ſays he, *make an obſervation or two upon the name itſelf, which, by interpretation, is render'd the ſtar of the ſea, and is very properly apply'd to the holy Virgin.——For as a ſtar projects its rays, without any change in the form or contexture of it; ſo the holy Virgin brought forth a ſon, without changing the ſtate proper to her as a Virgin.*

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* *Loquemur pauca & ſuper hoc nomine. Quod interpretatum maris ſtella dicitur, & matri virgini valdè convenienter aptatur.——Quia ſicut ſine ſui corruptione ſidus ſuum emittit radium, ſic abſque ſui læſione virgo parturit filium.*

IT will be of more importance to enquire concerning the deſignation of her perſon, by this name, as ſhe was of ſuch a particular tribe or family; it being one end of impoſing names, the better to preſerve and aſcertain the genealogy of thoſe, to whom they are given; particularly, in relation to the genealogy of the Virgin-mother, the mother of *Chriſt*, the Son of *David*, and for that reaſon call'd ſo, becauſe he was to deſcend lineally from him.

IT is equally neceſſary then, that the genealogy of the holy Virgin ſhould be aſcertain'd to us, as that of *Chriſt*. For tho' ſome learned men have been of opinion, it was ſufficient to denominate *Chriſt* the ſon of *David*, according to the ſenſe intended by that appellation; that *Joſeph*, his reputed father, and eſpouſed to his mother, was of that tribe; a woman, by the law of *Levirate*, who was to marry the man neareſt in blood to her, being by her marriage conſider'd as of his line, and ſo as to compute her deſcent by it *. The ſon, accordingly, of ſuch a mother, deduc'd his line from the ſame huſband, by right of inheritance; and by parity of reaſon, that one who marry'd the relict of his deceas'd brother, was expreſſly requir'd to do it, in hopes, or with a deſign of *raiſing up ſeed* to that brother. And there was the ſtronger reaſon, why the genealogy of *Chriſt* ſhould have been deduc'd according to St. *Matthew*, in the line of *Joſeph*, becauſe he was himſelf of the ſame tribe with that of *Mary*. And ſo the two different families of the tribe from which our Saviour deriv'd, from the one by a legal, from the other by a lineal deſcent, were united in theſe two perſons. Yet, perhaps, there may be ſome difficulty in determining exactly, when, or by which of their more immediate predeceſſors, this union firſt commenc'd; tho' if *Joſeph* was, as is here ſuppos'd, eſpous'd to her, by right of proximity in blood, the period of its commencing could not, upon any reaſonable preſumption, have been far diſtant from the birth of *Chriſt*.

BUT whatever right he, who legally ſucceeded any perſon as a ſon in his inheritance, might have to be called his ſon, and to derive his genealogy in the ſame common line with him; yet God having promis'd to *David*, that the *fruit of his body* ſhould ſit upon his throne, it was neceſſary that *Chriſt*, who was the ſubject of this promiſe, ſhould, according to the natural and direct conſtruction of it, deduce his line from *David*, not only by a legitimated, but by a natural and proper deſcent.

THERE is an argument which it may be here proper for me to take ſome notice of, which has been urg'd againſt the truth even of *Chriſt*'s legal extraction, as recorded by St. *Matthew*. This argument is drawn from a ſolemn commination of God, wherewith the prophet *Jeremy* was *charg'd*; namely, that he ſhould *write Jeconiah childleſs; a man that ſhould not proſper in his days; for no man of his ſeed ſhould proſper, ſitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah* [‡]. They infer from this intermination, that *Jeſus Chriſt*, concerning whom it was declar'd by another prophet, that he ſhould ſit upon the throne of *David*, could not derive his deſcent from *Jeconiah*, nor conſequently, in the order that evangeliſt deduces it, from *David*. For a ſolution of which difficulty, it is anſwer'd,

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* Vid. Lightf. Harm.

1. THAT this command to the prophet to write *Jeconiah* childleſs, reſpects the time before his captivity, and does not extend to the children, which he might have after it [*].

2. THAT the like interminations of God, as appears from the caſe of the *Ninevites* in particular, are interpreted to imply a ſecret condition of repentance, in conſequence of which, God may be ſuppos'd, or may oblige himſelf by ſome ſecret determination of his will, to remit them. *Lightfoot* accordingly repreſents it as the opinion of the Rabbies, that this ſentence againſt *Jeconiah* was revers'd, by means of the repentance he exercis'd during the time of his being in priſon.

3. IT is concluded from the twenty eighth verſe, that what is here reader'd *childleſs*, cannot be underſtood, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, nor perhaps at all in the literal ſenſe, of that word; for there *Jeconiah* is not only mention'd as caſt out, but his ſeed. And therefore it is obſervable, that the ſeptuagint, inſtead of *childleſs*, render the original [†] *baniſh'd*, or as one formally exterminated by the voice of a cryer appointed to that end.

4. THO' this anſwer ſhould not be admitted; yet the intermination we are here conſidering may be accounted for; and the prophecy of *Iſaiah*, which ſpeaks of *Chriſt*'s ſitting on the throne of *David*, hold good, as that prophet ſpeaks concerning the ſpiritual kingdom of *Chriſt*, and *Jeremiah* of a temporal kingdom; which *Chriſt*, tho' deſcended from *David* by the line of *Jeconiah*, diſclaimed all pretenſions to.

THIS may be ſufficient to obviate one of the principal cavils againſt the genealogy of *Chriſt*, with reſpect to his legal deſcent, as recorded by St. *Matthew*. But it being thought neceſſary towards the accompliſhment of what was foretold concerning the

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[‡] *Jer*. 22. 30.

[*] St. *Ambroſe* gives the ſame ſolution. *Per illam auctoritatem propheticam, non negatur ex ſemine Jechoniæ poſteros naſcituros & ideo de ſemine ejus Chriſtus eſt.*

[†] Ἐκκήρυκτον

Meſſiah, that he ſhould alſo be the ſon of *David*, in a proper and lineal deſcent, *according to the fleſh*. It is equally neceſſary to conclude, whatever preſumptions have been objected to the contrary, that St. *Luke* propos'd to deduce his genealogy in the male line; which, tho' *Joſeph* is at the foot of, yet he is there mention'd in regard of his being the husband of *Mary*, and with a deſign, probably, to prevent all grounds of ſuſpicion concerning her virtue or innocence; which thoſe, who as yet perhaps did not know any thing of the manner how *Chriſt* was conceiv'd, might too eaſily entertain. Beſides that, it was not uſual among the Jews to mention the females in their genealogies, but a rule with them, as we obſerv'd before, that women, who were marry'd, ſhould compute their deſcent in the line of their husbands. So that the words, in the concluſion of *Chriſt*'s genealogy, according to St. *Luke*, may be thus interpreted, in order to ſhew the conſiſtency of it with that of St. *Matthew*. Then *Jeſus* himſelf began to be about thirty years old, who, in common opinion, was the ſon of *Joſeph*; which *Joſeph* was the ſon of *Eli*, not by natural deſcent, but in right of his ſpouſe *Mary*, *Eli*'s daughter; which *Eli* was, in a true and lineal deſcent, the ſon of *Matthat*.

I am ſenſible, many other difficulties have been thought to occur, in reconciling the two genealogies of *Chriſt*. But it does not conſiſt with my deſign to enter into all the nice diſquiſitions, which every ſubject may give occaſion to. I have ſatisfy'd my ſelf with obſerving that difficulty in relation to my preſent ſubject, which has been look'd upon as one of the greateſt, and conſiderable, above all others, in the nature of it; and therefore it was particularly urg'd by *Julian* the apoſtate, againſt the truth of the evangelical hiſtory, concerning *Chriſt*'s deſcent; and upon this pretence, that it was impoſſible, in the reaſon of the thing, for one man to have two fathers; which yet *Joſeph* (in his way of arguing) according to the different accounts of the two evangeliſts, muſt have had, one of them nam'd *Jacob*, the other of them *Eli*. But it appears from what has been ſaid, in order to reconcile this ſeeming inconſiſtency, what is here objected, is ſo far from implying any impoſſibility, that it may be accounted for upon very good and probable grounds.

As to any other objections againſt the genealogy of *Chriſt*, recorded by the two evangeliſts, or by either of them, which may appear not to be altogether ill founded, what I am going to obſerve may indifferently, and in general, ſerve as an anſwer to them; namely, that both theſe genealogies were publiſh'd at a time, when, if there had been any material error, much more any inconſiſtency in them, the Jews, as by having recourſe to their publick records they eaſily might, ſo there is the higheſt probability that they would have obſerv'd and detected it. That ſince nothing of this appears, it is poſſible that the difficulties, which have been ſince obſerv'd, might ariſe from ſome change or omiſſion of names, occaſion'd by the negligence of tranſcribers; or, if this ought not to be ſuppos'd, that ſuch difficulties are not to be attributed to any real or intrinſick cauſe, but accidentally to the ignorance of interpreters; eſpecially after the publick genealogies were loſt; and there was no coming at the means of rectifying any miſtakes by conſulting them, or comparing them together.

II. Having obſerv'd what appear'd moſt proper, in relation to the name of the mother of *Chriſt*, I am, in the next place, to conſider another character of her perſon, and which is indeed peculiar to her as a mother, that of a *Virgin*. That ſhe was ſo at the time of her conception, neither is, nor can be queſtion'd by thoſe, who believe the ſcriptures. And that ſhe ſhould continue ſo till the time *that holy thing ſhe had conceiv'd ſhould be born of her*, it is pious to believe, were the ſcriptures ſilent on this head, in honour both to the manner of his conception, and the ſacredneſs of his perſon.

There have been, however, certain hereticks, who deny'd the virginity of the holy mother, not only before the birth of *Chriſt*, but at time of her conception. The *Ebionites*, with the followers of *Cerinthus*, who oppos'd his divinity, contended, and for that reaſon, that he was even generated and conceiv'd in the ordinary way; and that *Joſeph* was his natural father; his father, in a true and proper ſenſe. Why *Joſeph* ſhould be call'd his father, good reaſons may indeed be aſſign'd, from his being eſpous'd to the holy Virgin; from his cohabiting with her, and by right of *Chriſt*'s adoption; and who was, for that reaſon, among others, ſuppos'd *the ſon of Joſeph*. Which right was ſtill more evident, if *Joſeph* were contracted to *Mary*, on account of proximity of blood; and according to the legal courſe of inheritance. For, on this ſuppoſition, the reaſonableneſs whereof has been obſerv'd above, *Chriſt* was not the ſon of *Joſeph* merely by virtue of a voluntary adoption, but of a ſtrict hereditary right.

Others have queſtion'd, whether, after the birth of *Chriſt*, the holy Virgin ſtill continued in a perfect ſtate of virginity; they argue, when it is ſaid, that *Joſeph knew her not till ſhe had brought forth her firſt-born ſon*; the literal and moſt obvious ſenſe of the words ſeems to import, that from this time he did know her, according to a chaſte way of ſpeaking in the *Hebrew* ſtyle, and probably deriv'd from it to other languages [*]. But, to ſpeak to the difficulty objected, when it is ſaid, that *Joſeph did not know his wiſe, until ſhe had brought forth her firſt-born ſon*; according to the phraſeology of the *Hebrews*, the words do not import, that he then knew her, but only what was proper to be obſerv'd, that during the time before the birth of *Chriſt*, he did not know her. Neither, on that occaſion, was there any viſible cauſe, why the evangeliſt ſhould mention after what manner *Joſeph* might cohabit with her from that time.

UNTIL, even in the common way of ſpeaking, has not always relation to what may happen afterwards, but ſometimes only relates to what happen'd antecedently to the time which it is apply'd to denote the period of. The inference would be altogether as juſt, as that which is pretended to be drawn from theſe words of St. *Matthew*; if it ſhould be ſaid, that becauſe *Michal had no children until the day of her death*, therefore 'tis reaſonable to ſuppoſe that ſhe had children after her death; or that when *Job* ſays, *till I die I will not remove my integrity from me*, a good proof might be drawn from hence of a future ſtate, wherein he would forfeit his integrity. Other teſtimonies might be cited to the purpoſe; but theſe are ſufficient to ſhew, that the word *until* frequently denotes no more, than the expiration of a certain limited time, without regard to what may happen after it.

NEITHER can it, with more reaſon, be inferr'd, that becauſe *Chriſt* is called the firſt-born ſon of *Mary*, that therefore ſhe had any ſon or child afterwards; this expreſſion only importing the denial of any former birth. It is indifferent, as to an ordinary ſignification of the word, and particularly in the holy ſcriptures, whether any other birth be conſequent to it or not. When God ſmote all the firſt-born in the land of *Egypt*, it cannot be ſuppos'd, upon any reaſonable grounds, that there were among them no males, but who had brethren. Neither, when it is ſaid, that *all the firſt-born of the children of Iſrael ſhould be ſanctify'd to God*, can it, with greater probability, be inferr'd, that there was not one family among them, but what had more children than one.

THERE are other texts urg'd againſt the perpetual virginity of the mother of our Lord, on occaſion of mentioning his brethren, and thoſe too as the ſons of *Mary*. As to the former branch of this objection, I need only obſerve, that it was cuſtomary among the Jews, to call their near relations, eſpecially their cozen germans, brethren; which conſideration ſupplies us ſtill with a more full and diſtinct ſolution of what is objected in the ſecond place, that *Mary, the mother of James and Joſes*, our Lord's brethren [*], was not the ſame *Mary* with the mother of our Lord, but another *Mary*, the wife of *Cleophas*, her ſiſter; and therefore her children, according to the language of the Jews, might properly, by virtue of that relation, be ſtyl'd his brethren.

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[*] Plut. in Alex. *Neque aliam cognoſcebat mulierem.* In Romul. *Hic Laurentiam cognovit.* Cæſar. Bell. Gall. l. 6. *Intra annum vigeſimum fœminæ notitiam habuiſſe, in turpiſſimis habent rebus.*

AND, if no arguments can be drawn from the holy ſcriptures to ſhew, that the holy Virgin always continued in a ſtate of virginity afterwards; certainly, if we examine the queſtion relating to it by any light, which our own minds may afford, it will appear much more reaſonable to conclude for the affirmative; and that, in regard to that high and peculiar glory, whereby ſhe was diſtinguiſh'd in the conception of *Chriſt*, ſhe would for ever inviolably maintain that ſtate, wherein yet a farther miracle had been work'd, at the birth of *Chriſt*, to preſerve her. Which leads me to ſay ſomething, as I propos'd, firſt, concerning the manner; and, after that, concerning the time and place of *Chriſt*'s birth.

SECT. II.

Of the manner, time, and place of Chriſt's birth.

THERE will be the leſs occaſion to enlarge on the former of theſe particulars, on account of what has been ſaid concerning the perpetual virginity of the holy mother: And from which it may be, and has been piouſly concluded, that, upon the birth of our Saviour, ſhe continued in the ſame ſtate, with reſpect to her perſon, as before; and which was, in all reſpects, proper to a Virgin. This concluſion ſeems to be the more reaſonable, on account of that prophecy of *Iſaiah*; *Behold, a Virgin ſhall conceive, and bring forth a ſon.* Where an extraordinary interpoſition of a divine power is equally foretold, both as to the conception, and birth of *Chriſt*. But if a Virgin had only conceiv'd, and not brought forth a ſon, and in a ſtate too proper to a Virgin, there had not, it is argu'd, been that neceſſity of a ſpecial divine interpoſition, in regard to his birth, which is here ſuppos'd.

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[*] *Matt.* 27. 56.

The objection againſt the poſſibility of the thing, has been commonly and well anſwer'd, from our Saviour's paſſing through the door, while it was ſhut, into the room where the apoſtles were ſitting. Theſe two extraordinary facts are ſometimes, indeed, indifferently apply'd, to illuſtrate each other. And accordingly St *Auguſtin*, by way of reverſe to the preſent argument, proves the poſſibility of our Saviour's paſſing, after ſo miraculous a manner, through the door, from the manner and circumſtances of his birth *.

There is another common enquiry under this head, tho' it does not ſeem ſo directly to ſerve any great end of religion or morality; whether the holy Virgin felt any pain, or was ſubject, in any kind, to the diſorders incident, on the like occaſion, to other women. But this enquiry is, in great meaſure, already obviated by the former ſuppoſition, of her continuing at the birth of *Chriſt* inviolably and entirely a Virgin; which, for an obvious reaſon, from the miraculous manner of it, removes the cauſe of thoſe dolours, which other mothers feel in bearing children.

That commination to *Eve*, *in ſorrow ſhalt thou bring forth children*, has been commonly urg'd, in oppoſition to what is here inſinuated, as reſpecting the whole female race under the ſame circumſtances. To which it is anſwer'd, that this general commination to marry'd women, for ſo we now underſtand it, has a particular reſpect (as appears from the words immediately following thoſe which are here cited) to their being marry'd women, and is founded in the relation which they bear to their husbands, as parents in common with them. But tho' the holy Virgin was eſpous'd † to *Joſeph*, and is in expreſs terms call'd by the angel *his wiſe*; yet ſhe not having that commerce with him, which this intermination ſuppoſes between husbands and wives; the reaſon of it did not extend, nor conſequently the general effects of it, to her. Or it may be ſaid, that God, by a ſpeciall grace, in favour to the holy Virgin, or on account of her extraordinary piety, and on ſo extraordinary an occaſion, might have diſpens'd with the common or natural order of things. Thoſe who are not ſatisfy'd with theſe conſiderations, may conſult the anſwer of St. *Auguſtin* in the margin, to which I chuſe to refer them ‡.

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* *Moli corporis, ubi divinitas erat, oſtia clauſa non obſtiterunt; ille quippe non eis apertis intrare potuit. Quo naſcente virginitas matris, inviolata permanſit.* In Joan.

† *Non virginitatis ereptio, ſed conjugis teſtificatio, & nuptiarum celebratio declaratur.* Ambroſ. in Luc.

‡ *Ab hâc ſententiâ excipitur virgo mater Dei: Quæ quia ſine peccati colluvione, & ſine virilis admixtionis detrimento Chriſtum ſuſcepit; ſine dolore genuit; & ſine integritatis violatione, pudore virginitatis integro permanſit.*

II. Another conſiderable circumſtance of our Saviour's birth, which I propos'd to ſpeak to, relates to the time of it; and it is the more neceſſary we ſhould examine this point with greater care, as one material argument, in order to aſcertain the truth of the chriſtian religion, may be drawn from it.

Now there were three periods eſpecially, when it was foretold by the prophets, that *Chriſt* the *Meſſiah* ſhould come. The firſt period was to happen upon the accompliſhment of that prophecy of *Jacob*; *The ſcepter ſhall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come* *. That is, the Jews, who were ſo denominated from *Judah*, ſhall not ceaſe to be a political body, and to exerciſe a judicial power and authority, or have their government taken from them, till the time that *Shiloh*, or the *Meſſiah*, ſo the ancient Jews all along interpreted the word, ſhall appear. For the ſcepter, or rod, does not only denote royal power, but any judicial or legiſlative power, under what form of government ſoever. And the Jews retain'd ſuch a power, not only after the defection of the ten tribes, but during the ſeveral breaches and innovations which were made in their government till the time of *Chriſt*'s appearance, and which we therefore look upon as a conſiderable circumſtance to prove, that he was in truth *that Chriſt, who ſhould come into the world*.

The Jews, in anſwer to this, ſay, that by ſcepter, we are to underſtand the tyrannical government, which the enemies of *Judah* would exerciſe over that tribe till the coming of the *Meſſiah*. But how could the legiſlative power, which is here ſtill preſum'd to continue in *Judah*, conſiſt with a tyranny, which muſt, at the ſame time, be ſuppos'd to deſtroy the exerciſe of it? What a ſtrange form of government muſt that be, where the legiſlative power, and the ſcepter, or executive power, could be conceiv'd to ſubſiſt apart, or without any dependence on one another? Neither is it true, in fact, that the ſcepter in this ſenſe, as it denotes oppreſſion, did not depart from the family of *Judah*, which continued during a ſucceſſion of ſeveral Princes deriving from it, in a flouriſhing ſtate. And yet the Patriarch does not ſay, that there ſhould be a conſtant uninterrupted ſucceſſion of the Kings of *Judah*, till the period here determin'd; but only intends, that their civil polity, and the right of judicature, ſhould not, before that period, depart from them, ſo as to be finally deſtroy'd. And yet from the time of *David* to the babyloniſh captivity, for the ſpace of four hundred and ſeventy years, the ſcepter, with reſpect to all the proper rights of it, was continued in that tribe. During the times of their captivity in the days of *Jeconiah*, and other Princes, they had ſtill certain governors, who exercis'd a judicial authority among them. As, from the babyloniſh captivity to *Nehemiah*; firſt in *Zerubbabel*, for the ſpace of a hundred and fifty five years: And afterwards in a ſucceſſion of governors from him to *Nehemiah*, who, without being particularly nam'd, are mention'd in general by *Nehemiah*, as *the former governors, that were before him* [*]. From *Nehemiah*, who was of the tribe of *Judah* [†], the government was continued among them after the ſame manner; and afterwards in the *Macchabees*, who, tho' they were of the tribe of *Levi*, yet had intermarry'd with that of *Judah*, and ſo deriv'd from it by the female line; tho', as the Jews indeed did not compute their families from the female, but from the male line [‡], this anſwer does not ſeem ſatisfactory. It ſhould rather be ſaid, that the remainder of the tribe of *Levi*, among that of *Judah*, was incorporated with it after the ſame manner as the tribe of [**] *Benjamin*; and from thence was entitled to the ſame denomination, and to certain common rights of it. Of theſe governors, there were two ſorts; ſome preſided over thoſe, who ſtill continued in exile; others over ſuch, who return'd into their own country.

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* *Gen.* 49. 10.

2. THE ſcepter might be ſaid to continue in *Judah*, by reaſon of the great power and authority veſted in the Sanhedrim: Which extended, as *Helvicus* cites proper authorities in proof of it, to capital caſes; to a diſcretionary right of declaring war; and on which, in ſome meaſure, the royal power itſelf depended [††]. This author, therefore, obſerves from *Joſephus*, that when *Herod* was cited before the Sanhedrim to anſwer for himſelf, upon an accuſation of blood, *R. Sameas* addreſs'd himſelf to the members of it in theſe words [‡‡], *Brethren of the Sanhedrim, and Kings*. From which he obſerves, that the conſiſtorial power was, at that time conſider'd as ſuperior to that of *Hyrcanus*, who was then King [*].

THE difficulty lies in proving, that the Sanhedrim properly conſiſted of the tribe of *Judah*. But an eaſy ſolution may be given to this. The tribe of *Judah* was the principal, and moſt numerous tribe: Part of the other tribes, which return'd, or were intermix'd with it, were denominated from it. And tho' we grant there were governors among them of the tribe of *Levi*; yet as they held their authority from the tribe of *Judah*, and in it, the ſcepter, which was ſtill radically and virtually in that tribe, could not be ſaid to depart from it, any more than a kingdom can be ſaid to be diveſted of its government, as ſuch, by transferring it, in conſequence of its own proper choice, on a foreign family.

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[*] *Nehem.* 5. 15. [†] Euſeb. in Chronic. p. 156.

[‡] *Familia matris, non vocatur familia.* Helv.

[**] *Rediit Judas cum Benjamine, quæ tribus Benjamin Judæ fuit acceſſio. Unde terra Judæa dicta, gens Judæi.* Grot.

[††] *Poteſtas regis quodam modò dependet à ſynedrio.* Talmud Santi. cap 3. *Dicit, bella ſuſcepta ſunt pro nutu atque arbitrio ſynedrii.* Pol. in Loc. ab Helv. memb. 3.

[‡‡] Ἄνδρες σύνεδροι ϗ βασιλεῖς.

[*] *Ubi obſervandum quòd regem, tunc Hyrcanum, poſtponit ſenatoribus.*

IT is ſtill objected, that *Herod*, who was no Jew, but a foreigner, govern'd *Judæa* before the coming of *Chriſt*; and that the ſcepter was therefore departed from *Judah* before that period. To this it is reply'd, that *Herod* was a pretender, who had no legal or proper right to the government; nor any power, but what was originally owing to force, and afterwards ſupported by it. Under the former part of his tyranny, *Ariſtobulus* and *Hyrcanus*, to whom the right of the kingdom belong'd, were living. After they were ſlain, the Jews oppos'd *Herod*'s adminiſtration, and aſſerted their legal rights and liberties, till weary'd by his many oppreſſions; or perhaps, intimidated by the many acts of cruelty he had committed, they made ſubmiſſion to him towards the latter end of his reign; a few months, two years at the moſt, before the birth of *Chriſt*. And it was not neceſſary that a period ſhould have been put to the jewiſh government all at once; or that, upon the expiration of it, *Shiloh* ſhould immediately, or at the very inſtant have appear'd. Mr. *Mede* was ſo far from being of opinion, there was any ſuch neceſſity, that, according to his calculation, this prophecy was not fulfill'd, till under the reign of *Titus*. When there was a more general converſion, and *gathering of the Gentiles*, and before which time, ſome form of government, at leaſt, remain'd among the Jews, ſufficient to diſtinguiſh them as a people, or political ſociety. Upon which principle, tho' it is only preſum'd above, that *Herod* was not by nation a Jew; yet no great inconvenience would follow, upon our granting him to be a foreigner. And ſo the difficulties, wherewith learned men have perplex'd themſelves and others, as to this critical point of hiſtory, might have been eaſily avoided, without the leaſt inconvenience, as to the matter in queſtion.

SOME of the Jews, not knowing otherways how to anſwer the arguments which we draw from this prophecy, in order to prove, that *Shiloh*, or the *Meſſiah*, is already come, have pretended, what has no manner of appearance, or probability in fact, but is confuted by all hiſtory in the world, ſo far as we know any thing of hiſtory, that there is ſtill ſome where a ſucceſſion of Princes in the line of *David*, among the reſidue of the babyloniſh captives. Others, not knowing where, or in what part of the world, to find any dominion of thoſe Princes, will have it, that the jewiſh ſtate ſtill ſubſiſts among the deſcendents of the ten tribes, beyond

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the ſabbatical river. But all we can infer from this imaginary place of their reſidence, is, that we are here directed for a proof, upon the credit of a ſtory, too chimerical ever to be prov'd itſelf, and which, if it could be prov'd, would be here nothing to the purpoſe; becauſe the preſent diſpute does not, in the leaſt, relate to the ſucceſſion of the ten tribes, but only and entirely to the ſucceſſion of the tribe of *Judah*.

2. It was foretold the birth of *Chriſt* ſhould happen, while the ſecond temple was yet ſtanding. One remarkable prophecy to this purpoſe, is that of *Haggai*. *The deſire of all nations ſhall come, and I will fill this houſe with glory.—The glory of this latter houſe ſhall be greater than the glory of the former* *. To the ſame effect, and probably with a deſign to explain the meaning of this prophecy, *Malachi* declares † to the Jews, that he, *whom they expected, ſhould come into the temple.* Theſe two prophecies expreſly limit the time of the *Meſſiah*'s coming, to that of the ſecond temple; which being now deſtroy'd, it will neceſſarily follow, either that the *Meſſiah* did come while it was ſtanding, or that the prediction concerning this circumſtance of his coming was never to receive its accompliſhment, and cannot indeed now poſſibly receive it. If the *Meſſiah* really came while it ſtood, there could be no perſon in whom all the characters proper to the *Meſſiah* were ſo conſpicuous, as in *Jeſus* of *Nazareth*. There were indeed before the deſtruction of that temple many falſe *Chriſts*, as himſelf foretold; but they could produce no credentials of their miſſion; and were, on many other accounts, detected as impoſtors. However, their impious pretenſions had this good accidental effect, that they plainly diſcover'd the juſt grounds of a perſuaſion which then ſo generally obtain'd, that the period was at hand mention'd by the prophets, when thoſe, *who look'd for conſolation in Iſrael*, might expect the coming of the *Meſſiah*.

If, on the other hand, this prophecy was never to receive its accompliſhment, to what end worthy of the wiſdom or goodneſs of God was it made? Or why were the circumſtances of its being accompliſh'd particularly ſpecify'd? How is it poſſible, were we to ſay nothing of the wiſdom or goodneſs, to reconcile it with the veracity of God, with that character of him given by the Holy Spirit? *He is faithful who hath promiſed*; that he ſhould yet make promiſes to men, and raiſe in them well grounded and reaſonable hopes, (hopes founded on no conditions on their part) of what he never had any intention to perform.

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[*] *Hagg.* 2. 7, 9. † *Mal.* 3. 1.

THE Jews themſelves are ſo ſenſible how injurious it is to the honour and perfections of the divine nature, to make any ſuch ſuppoſition; or to queſtion the veracity of God in relation to his promiſes, how far ſo ever he may, with the ſafety of this attribute, remit his threats; that they ſay, but they ſay it only for that reaſon, and therefore without proof, or poſſibility of proof, that the prophecy of *Haggai* has been already accompliſh'd. For there is no way of ſhewing the accompliſhment of it, but by making it appear, how, and in what reſpects, the glory of the ſecond temple was greater than that of the firſt temple. This could not be on the account of its magnificence, or any external beauty and luſtre of it. In reſpect to which, it was ſo much inferior to the firſt temple, that *the Prieſts and Levites, and chief of the fathers who were ancient men, and had ſeen the firſt houſe, when the foundation of this houſe was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice* *. And therefore *Haggai*, the better to prepare the Jews for receiving this prophecy in the true ſenſe, by the command of God puts the queſtion to them. *Who is left among you, that ſaw this houſe in her firſt glory? And how do ye ſee it now? Is it not in your eyes, in compariſon of it, as nothing* †?

IN reſpect to the ſymbols of God's more immediate preſence, there were, in the former temple, the *Urim* and *Thummim*, the ark of the Covenant, the fire which deſcended to conſume the ſacrifices, the *Shechinah*, and the ſpirit of prophecy; all which ceas'd in the ſecond temple. And therefore ſince it was both on account of its ſtructure, its external ornaments, and the ſpecial manifeſtations of the divine grace and power in it, ſo much inferior in glory to the firſt temple, and confeſſedly by that very prophet, who foretold it ſhould exceed the firſt temple in glory; the reaſon of the preference given to it, in this reſpect, muſt, and can only ariſe from the perſonal appearance of the Son of God in it; *the brightneſs of his Father's glory, and the expreſs image of his perſon, in whom the fulneſs of the Godhead dwelt bodily.* And the characters given by the prophets of the perſon who was to appear and come into it, *the angel of the covenant, the delight of the Iſraelites, and the deſire of all nations*; as they might properly belong to *Jeſus Chriſt*, and could not, on any pretence, belong to any other perſon, who appear'd at that time: It evidently follows, that he, and he alone, was, in truth, the *Chriſt*, the *Son of the living God*.

ANOTHER remarkable note of time when the *Meſſiah* ſhould appear, was the expiration of *ſeventy weeks*, mention'd by the prophet *Daniel*. Within the compaſs of which time, ſeveral important events were to happen; God having, before the period, here aſſign'd, ſhould commence, determin'd, that there ſhould be a method apply'd *to finiſh the tranſgreſſion*; to make an *end of ſins*; *to make reconciliation for iniquity*; *and to bring in everlaſting righteouſneſs*: That, *the Meſſiah, the Prince, ſhould appear*; *and that he ſhould be cut off, but not for himſelf*: That *a people of a Prince ſhould come, and deſtroy the city and the ſanctuary*: And, *that the ſacrifice and oblation ſhould ceaſe, even until the conſummation*.

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* *Ezra* 3. 12. † *Hagg.* 2. 3.

If we believe that *Jeſus* of *Nazareth* appear'd at the time, when we have all the evidence, which any fact, whereof we are not eye-witneſſes, can have, to prove, that he did appear, the accompliſhment of theſe ſeveral predictions is eaſily made out. As to ſuch of them, which immediately concern his perſonal character, or ſufferings, there never was any other perſon, to whom they can ſeverally, or any of them, in this compaſs of time, (or indeed at any other time) be ſuppos'd applicable. It is not neceſſary, that I ſhould critically examine of how many years each week, in the prophetical ſtyle, conſiſted. It is ſufficient to our purpoſe, that theſe events happen'd in the time of our Saviour; that the *Meſſiah* was to come at that time; eſpecially before the ſacrifice and oblation ſhould ceaſe; that they are, in fact, now ceas'd; and yet no other time can be aſſign'd, when they firſt ceas'd; nor any other perſon, beſides *Chriſt*, ſpecify'd, on occaſion of whoſe ſacrifice, (which is here expreſs'd by his *being cut off, but not for himſelf*) God would cauſe them to ceaſe. It cannot now, indeed, ſo much be ſaid, there is an intermiſſion of them, as that they will be for ever diſcontinued, or *until the conſummation*. It is not material, whether there be any truth in the hiſtory, tho' learned men have thought the credit of it ſupported on very good grounds, that all attempts of rebuilding the temple, and reſtoring ſacrifice, have been fruſtrated by ſome ſpecial, or viſible interpoſition of a divine power; it ſufficiently anſwers our deſign, that ſhortly after that one ſacrifice and oblation, which *Chriſt* made, not for himſelf, but for the people; and, in order *to bring everlaſting righteouſneſs*, the temple was deſtroy'd, and that, in fact, the ſacrifice did then too ceaſe, with many other inſtituted rites and modes of worſhip proper to that place.

III. The other conſiderable circumſtance, which I propos'd to ſpeak to, relating to the birth of *Chriſt*, is the place of it; which was *Bethlehem*, according to an expreſs prediction of the * prophet

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* *Micah* 5. 2.

Micah. And tho' there is ſome variation of the words between this prophet and St. *Matthew*, as they are referr'd to by him, yet the difference, on this occaſion, is not ſo great, but it may be eaſily reconcil'd. The prophet ſpeaks of *Bethlehem*, as a little city; the evangeliſt, as not the leaſt among the princes or cities of *Judah*; which, according to a uſual way of negation, a figure of ſpeech common to all languages, denotes ſomething more or greater, than the words ſeem literally to expreſs. So that by repreſenting it as not one of the leaſt cities, the expreſſion may be interpreted in direct oppoſition to what *Micah* ſays concerning it, that it was one of the greateſt or moſt conſiderable cities. But no inconſiſtency can be inferr'd from what is here obſerv'd. This city might be little with reſpect to the extent of it, or to the number of its inhabitants, in *Micah*'s ſenſe; and yet the greateſt, in the ſenſe of St. *Matthew*, by being eminently ſo, in giving birth to the Saviour of the world, the Son of God. And it was the more conſiderable, on a like account, as ſeveral illuſtrious perſons had been born in this city before him; *Boaz*, in particular, the husband of *Ruth*; King *David*; and the prophet *Iſaiah*.

ANOTHER difficulty has been obſerv'd, with reſpect to our Saviour's birth, on occaſion of his being call'd a *Nazarene*, but without any good foundation; it being uſual for perſons to take a character from the place of their ordinary habitation, as well as from that of their birth. But the ground indeed, upon which the difficulty principally ariſes, as to our Saviour's being call'd a *Nazarene*, is not in regard to the place of his birth, but from the reaſon which St. *Matthew* aſſigns of his being call'd a *Nazarene*; namely, that what *was ſpoken by the prophets to that end, might be fulfill'd*. For it no where appears from the prophets, nor from any one of them, that *Jeſus Chriſt* was to be call'd by that name.

To this ſeveral things are reply'd; 1. That prophets, by a uſual enallage of number in the holy ſcriptures †, may here be underſtood, as ſignifying no more than one prophet. 2. That, in referring to any prophetical paſſage, it is not neceſſary that the ſacred penmen ſhould repeat the very words wherein it is expreſs'd, provided they keep to the proper ſenſe and deſign of it. By this rule St. *Matthew* is juſtify'd in the application he makes of the prophecies to which he refers, in ſaying, *Jeſus* ſhould be call'd, or what in the *Hebrew* language imports the ſame thing, ſhould be a *Nazarene*: For there it is ſaid, that *a rod ſhall come out of the ſtem of Jeſſe, and a branch*, which, in the original, is the ſame with *Nazarene*, *ſhall grow out of his roots* *. St. *Matthew* therefore intends no more, by citing the authority of the prophets, to ſhew that *Jeſus* ſhould be call'd a *Nazarene*, but that he is the true and very branch ſpoken of by the prophets; particularly by *Iſaiah* and *Jeremiah*[*], under that diſtinguiſhing character.

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† *John* 6. 45. *Matt.* 23. 39.

* *Iſaiah* 11. 2.

OTHERS anſwer, that we are not here to underſtand prophets in the ſtrict ſenſe, as perſons divinely inſpir'd with the knowledge of things future; but prophets improperly ſo term'd, or ſuch as were call'd ſons of the prophets, from their being interpreters of the prophetical writings. From the ſenſe whereof, tho' no ſuch expreſs word was contain'd in them, they inferr'd, that *Jeſus* ſhould be denominated a *Nazarene*.

IT is obſerv'd, in the laſt place, St. *Matthew* ſays, *that it might be fulfill'd which was* ſpoken *by the prophets*. From whence they argue, that, notwithſtanding this name is not found expreſſly in the writings of any of the prophets, yet it might have been conveyed down by an authentic and known tradition, from ſeveral of them. A learned[†] author ſeems, upon all theſe conſiderations, to make too great and needleſs a conceſſion to the adverſaries of Chriſtianity, when he ſays, that this paſſage, if any, ſeems to afford them a ſpecious pretence of calumny and cavil againſt the chriſtian revelation, and is very difficultly accounted for.

I ſhall only obſerve, before I conclude this article, that a ſpecial providence of God was viſible, in the diſpoſition made for the birth of *Chriſt*, in the very place where he was born. In conſequence of a decree at that time, that all the world ſhould be tax'd, *Joſeph* and *Mary* his mother were oblig'd to go unto the city of *David*, call'd *Bethlehem*, to be tax'd there, as being of the houſe and lineage of *David*. While they remain'd there, the days were accompliſh'd that *Jeſus* ſhould be born. Had it not been in obedience to this decree, it is highly improbable that *Joſeph* and *Mary* would have taken ſuch a journey, in the condition ſhe was in, and at ſo unſeaſonable a time of the year. But God, who can effect his deſigns by what inſtruments he pleaſes, ſo order'd it, that, by the command of a heathen Prince, they ſhould at that time repair to *Bethlehem*; to the end this circumſtance of *Chriſt*'s birth ſhould render the accompliſhment of what the prophets had foretold concerning the place of it, more conſpicuous and remarkable. By this means too, it was providentially deſign'd, which accordingly came to paſs, that the birth of *Chriſt* was recorded in the publick acts of the Empire. For proof whereof, *Juſtin Martyr*, and *Tertullian* expreſſly appeal to them.

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[*] *Jer.* 23. 5.

[†] *Hic locus ſi quiſquam alius, in toto Novo Teſtamento, calumniæ & cavillis hoſtium opportunus videtur: Et difficillimè vindicatur. Unde Judæi petulanter inſurgunt, &c.* Spanh. Dub. Evang.

Of the CREED.

ARTICLE IV.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, *was crucify'd, dead, and buried.*

CHAP. I.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate.

BY the ſufferings of *Chriſt* under *Pontius Pilate* we are primarily to underſtand the pains and ignominy which he endur'd more immediately before and at the time of his death. Tho' it may not be improper to take occaſion from the article to reflect a little of his ſtate of humiliation, during the preceding courſe of his life. He was *a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with grief*, throughout the ſeveral periods of it. His ſacrifice indeed was finiſh'd upon the croſs, but it might properly be ſaid to begin in his cradle, or rather in the very circumſtances of his birth. For he was born of mean parents, in the meaneſt of places, where moſt things proper on the occaſion, and every thing ſuitable to the dignity of his perſon, appear'd to be wanting. What he afterwards obſerv'd of himſelf, was juſtly applicable, and almoſt literally true in this reſpect; *The fowls of the air have neſts, but the ſon of man hath not whereon to lay his head.* He was expoſ'd in his infancy to the inconveniences of a tedious and difficult journey into *Egypt*. He paſs'd his time, till he enter'd upon his prophetical office, when he was thirty years old, in great obſcurity; tho' he had all the wealth, all the power and glory of the world at command; yet he choſe a life of poverty and ſelf-denyal till that time, and as it has been ſuppos'd, of common labour, in it. For he was the reputed ſon of a carpenter, and, if we may credit *Tertullian* in particular, was ſaid to have work'd at his father's trade. His converſation lay among perſons in the loweſt ſtate and condition of life; and he choſe for his diſciples and followers a company of illiterate *Galileans*, and poor fiſhermen. The circumſtances preceding his death were ſtill greater arguments both of his ſufferings and his reſignation. He was derided and ſpit upon, and made the ſubject of all the calumny, than which there is nothing more irritating to a great and noble mind, which the wit or malice of his enemies could invent. He was arraign'd, condemn'd, and ſcourg'd, as if he had really been one of the greateſt malefactors; and afterwards felt thoſe dolours, and diſcover'd them in thoſe viſible effects and agonies, which no man had ever ſeen, or been ſenſible of before. Can we reflect on ſo great humility of the Son of God, and think our ſelves capable, after that, of doing any thing that may deſerve the name of a condeſcenſion? Or can we reflect on his ſufferings, and, at the ſame time, complain of any hard or injurious treatment? Certainly theſe conſiderations, if we duly attend to them, muſt equally contribute to create in us a becoming indifference to all the viſible glories and pleaſures of this world. They ſhould tend, at leaſt, to rectify our taſte of them in ſuch a meaſure, that we ſhould never think of our ſelves more highly than we ought to think, upon any imaginary or ſenſible advantage of poſſeſſing them. We ſhould farther learn from them (for 'tis difficult not to moralize on ſuch moving occaſions) to raiſe our ſelves, at once, above the terrors and flatteries of this world; and, in a word, whenever we are call'd upon to follow ſo great and bright an example, to ſhew, ſo far as we are capable, the ſame reſolution and conſtancy of mind, whether we are put to the tryal of *enduring the croſs*, or of *deſpiſing the ſhame*. To return from theſe occaſional, tho', I hope, not improper reflections; what has been ſaid already, may ſerve to give us a general notion of the ſufferings of *Chriſt*. But, in order to a more diſtinct explication of this branch of the article, I ſhall proceed a little farther upon theſe three enquiries.

I. WHY our Saviour choſe ſuch a paſſive ſtate and condition of life.

II. How the divine nature, being perſonally united in him with the human, he could truly be ſaid to ſuffer.

III. Why we here profeſs, in particular, to believe, that he ſuffered under *Pontius Pilate*.

I. The reſolution of the firſt enquiry, may be deduc'd from theſe ſeveral conſiderations following.

It was neceſſary that *Chriſt*, to the end he might make a valuable atonement to God for the ſins of men, and thereby reconcile ſinners to him, ſhould *fulfil all righteouſneſs*; whereof the paſſive duties, in this preſent ſtate, are a conſiderable, if not a more extenſive part. He only that was, on all accounts, without ſin, could be made ſin for us, on any account, proper to appeaſe the wrath of an offended and Almighty God.

It was neceſſary that *Chriſt* ſhould have choſen a paſſive ſtate of life, as he was deſign'd for the *Chriſtian pattern*; and as the influence of his example hereby became of more general extent to all Chriſtians. With this deſign, God *gave him a body*, as an excellent author obſerves, in a manner agreeable to that fine and noble ſpirit, which diſtinguiſhes him; tho' in terms too reſtrictive. *The Word became ſenſible, only to render truth intelligible. Reaſon became incarnate, to no other end, but to guide men to reaſon by their ſenſes* *. Without entring into a common place concerning the influence of great and good examples, I ſhall only cite another paſſage out of this author, and from the ſame chapter; where, in alluſion to our Saviour's taking upon him human nature, and his appearing in a human body, he has theſe words, which may ſerve to give us a general idea of whatever has been, or can be ſaid upon this ſubject. *But this order, by which we ought to be govern'd, is a Form too abſtracted to ſerve as a model for groſſer ſpirits; I grant it: Let us then give it a body; let us make it ſenſible; let us cloath it in ſeveral dreſſes to render it agreeable to carnal men; let us, if I may ſo ſpeak, incarnate it.*

Again, one deſign of *Chriſt*'s ſacrifice, was to repreſent to men the odious and deteſtable nature of ſin; to ſhew, how repugnant it is to the holineſs, and how provoking to the juſtice of God. This deſign was moſt viſibly anſwer'd, by our Saviour's performing his ſacrifice in the manner we have obſerv'd; and by his offering it up continually from the time of his birth, to that of his death. If a particular exception ought not to lie, on that extraordinary occaſion of his being transfigur'd, when it was neceſſary towards fortifying his diſciples againſt thoſe impreſſions, which might be made on them, from the ignominious and painful circumſtances preparatory to his death, and from the dangers which themſelves might be afterwards expos'd to, and which he had foretold they would be expoſ'd to; when it was ſo neceſſary, I ſay, upon theſe ſeveral accounts, that he ſhould at that time have given them a ſenſible demonſtration of his power hereafter of glorifying thoſe bodies, which were ſubject to ſo many troubles and calamities here. This, the venerable *Bede* obſerves, was providentially deſign'd, that the diſciples and followers of *Chriſt*, by contemplating that glory, which ſhould never have an end, might more reſolutely ſuſtain the tranſient and momentary evils of this world *.

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* Malb. Moral. Part 1. ch. 2.

II. How the divine nature being perſonally united in *Chriſt* with the human, he could truly be ſaid to ſuffer.

It is the more neceſſary to make a right ſtate of this queſtion, becauſe ſome have aſſerted, that, in conſequence of ſuch a union, it muſt be ſuppoſ'd the Godhead ſuffer'd. Others have argu'd, that if the divinity, to which the meritorious effects of *Chriſt*'s ſacrifice are attributed, did not ſuffer, it is difficlut to apprehend, how it could properly contribute any thing towards the ſatisfaction made by his ſufferings, or the merit of them.

But we deny, in the firſt place, that the perſonal union of the two natures infers any neceſſity why *Chriſt* ſhould have ſuffer'd in reſpect to his divine nature. For they are united after ſuch a manner, that they ſtill retain, as we obſerv'd before, their proper characters, and diſtinct operations. Though it was the ſame perſon therefore which ſuffer'd in the union of the divine and human nature; yet the paſſions and qualities of the human nature were not communicated to the divine, any more than the eſſential attributes of the divine nature to the human. And therefore the human nature being only capable of ſuffering, the divine altogether impaſſible, tho' we attribute pain and ſorrow to *Chriſt*, as God and man in one perſon; yet we appropriate them to the human nature only. As in the union of that ſoul and body, which conſtitute the perſon of *Peter*, when we ſay he is tall or wiſe, we do not intend he is tall with reſpect to his mind, or wiſe in relation to his body; but as he is compoſ'd of two parts, what indifferently affects either of them, is properly apply'd to the whole perſon; whatever diſtinct and incommunicable properties thoſe two parts may have ſeparately conſider'd. I ſhall only take a hint from this diſtinction, towards obviating what is pretended, as to the preſent argument, by the Jews, from that paſſage in ſcripture, where it is ſaid, their fore-fathers *crucify'd the Lord of glory*: A character, which confeſſedly, in a more peculiar manner, belongs to the divine nature. It is ſufficient to reply, that the Lord of glory was ſaid to be crucify'd, not as Lord of glory, or in reſpect to his divine nature, diſtinctly conſider'd; but to the perſonal union of the two natures in him, by reaſon of which he was truly the Lord of glory, and ſtyl'd ſo, tho' he could only ſuffer in his human nature.

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* *Piâ proviſione factum eſt, ut contemplatione ſemper manentis gaudii, ad breve tempus delibata fortiùs adverſa tolerarent.*

To the other branch of the former objection, we anſwer, tho' *Chriſt*, as God, could not ſuffer; yet the union of the divine nature with the human in the perſon of *Chriſt*, might give a value and merit to his ſufferings, which on no other account could be given to them. He who ſuffer'd was God and man, tho' he ſuffer'd only as man. There is no more difficulty in conceiving how this may be, than how the Holy Spirit of God is preſent in ſome perſons by the more ſpecial communications of his grace, than in other perſons, without changing their nature, or rendring them impeccable. If we ſuppoſe the moſt intimate union poſſible between the Spirit of God, and the ſoul of man; tho' ſuch a union muſt be allow'd to give a greater dignity to the perſon of ſuch a man; yet the Holy Spirit will ſtill leave him with all thoſe diſtinct qualities and paſſions, which are proper to him as a man, without loſing any thing of his own eſſential perfections. From all which, we conclude, that as the Son of God, that is, the perſon who was the Son of God, might ſuffer, tho' he could not ſuffer in his divine nature; ſo by virtue of the perſonal union of his human nature with the divine, what he ſuffer'd as man, might have the merit properly aſcrib'd to him, both as God and man; tho' the Godhead could not ſuffer. In this ſenſe God is ſaid *to have purchas'd the church with his own blood* *. A manner of expreſſion, which cannot otherways be accounted for, but upon this principle; that the diſtinct characters and actions of the two natures of *Chriſt*, are indifferently aſcrib'd to him as one perſon.

If this point need any farther illuſtration, it may be conſider'd, that ſuch actions and paſſions as are peculiar to the body, are yet attributed to the ſoul; and reciprocally the operations of the ſoul to the body. Thus a human ſoul is repreſented as *touching an unclean thing*, *God is ſaid to pour out his ſpirit upon all fleſh; and all fleſh to have corrupted its way.* Tho', if the ſoul and body were ſuppos'd in a ſeparate ſtate, nothing could be more irrational than to ſay, that a ſoul touches, or that a body is capable, in a moral ſenſe, of having any communication with the Spirit of God, or even of corrupting its own way. But as theſe two ſubſtances are perſonally united, and for that reaſon only, theſe and the like expreſſions have nothing inconſiſtent or improper in them.

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* *Acts* 20. 28.

III. WHY we profeſs, in particular, to believe, in ſaying, that *Chriſt* ſuffered under *Pontius Pilate*.

BY the ſufferings of *Chriſt*, as referr'd to this mark of time, we are properly to underſtand thoſe, which immediately preceded, or occaſion'd his death. And that being one of the moſt conſiderable events relating to him, wherein we are intereſted, and to which our redemption is, in a more eminent and ſpecial manner, aſcrib'd, it became neceſſary that the time of it ſhould be more particularly aſcertain'd. This time happen'd when *Pontius Pilate* was governor of *Judæa*, and it was very providentially appointed by God, that it ſhould happen at that time. For,

1. THE benefits of *Chriſt*'s paſſion being deſign'd to extend to all mankind, and not to the Jews only, it was highly agreeable to the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, that the hiſtory of it ſhould be atteſted in the moſt publick and authentick manner. What could have been contriv'd more proper to this end, than that *Chriſt*, who was to ſuffer at *Jeruſalem*, on account of his more immediate miſſion to the houſe of *Iſrael*, and a peculiar relation indeed which he had to that people, yet ſhould ſuffer under a *Roman* governor; who was to give an account of the moſt remarkable events that might happen, during his adminiſtration, to the ſenate at *Rome*, at that time the miſtreſs of all other cities, and the ſeat of Empire. By this means, all men had a fair opportunity of examining the evidence of a fact, which it concern'd every man to know the truth and certainty of. For it was not only done in the moſt open and publick manner, but committed to the publick records of the Empire; which, it is very probable, were extant in the time of *Tertullian*. If they were not then extant, as he might eaſily have been expos'd for aſſerting what was falſe in fact; ſo his enemies, no doubt, would have improv'd ſo favourable an advantage to his prejudice and diſcredit *.

2. THE ſufferings of *Chriſt* under *Pontius Pilate* diſcover'd, that the ſcepter, according to the prophecy of *Jacob*, was at that time departed from *Judah*; the Jews having then no power of capital puniſhment, one of the ſovereign and diſtinguiſhing rights of civil government †.

3. THERE was a conſiderable incident; and which might not have happen'd under any other judge, that render'd the innocence of *Chriſt*, by his ſuffering under *Pontius Pontius*, more clear and

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* From theſe records, it is not unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, that *Tacitus*, in his annals, might have tranſcrib'd the following paſſage. *Auctor nominis ejus Chriſtus, qui Tiberio imperante, per procuratorem Pontium Pilatum ſupplicio affectus eſt.* Ann. lib. 13.

† *John* 18. 31.

conſpi-

conſpicuous. For this ſame judge declar'd he found, upon examination, no fault in him; and was farther confirm'd in his opinion of him, as innocent of the crimes laid to his charge, on occaſion of a ſpecial meſſage from his wife, who deſir'd, in regard to a dream, wherewith ſhe had been, after an extraordinary manner, affected, that he would *have nothing to do with that juſt man*. And tho' afterwards he did * condemn him; he did it, and viſibly indeed appear'd to do it, rather to gratify the importunity of the Jews, than from any conviction in his own mind of what he ought to have done. Or perhaps he acted herein againſt his real judgment to prevent any inſinuations which his enemies might take the advantage of, to render him ſuſpected to his maſter at *Rome*; as if he had been wanting in a cauſe of treaſon, wherein his imperial majeſty's honour, dignity, and intereſts, might have appear'd to be concern'd. But what had *Tiberius* to fear from the competition of a Prince, who renounc'd all ſecular power and dominion: A claim to a kingdom purely ſpiritual, ſo foreign to his views and deſigns, and which he had never, perhaps, heard or thought of before, could not be ſuppos'd to give him any great umbrage or uneaſineſs.

But what I would principally obſerve, is the wiſe diſpoſition of providence, in appointing a *Roman* governor, upon our Saviour's arraignment, to be his judge. For had the power of judging him, by any ſhew of their own proper authority, remain'd among the Jews, who knows what crimes they would have charg'd him with, or upon what pretended evidence; the falſhood or colluſion whereof, it might have been otherways extremely difficult, if not impoſſible for his diſciples and followers to have fully detected.

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* It has been farther obſerv'd, as a ſpecial act of divine providence, with reſpect to the ſufferings of *Chriſt* under *Pontius Pilate*; that, notwithſtanding he had not by the nature of his office the power of life or death; this being in the governor of *Syria*, to whom he was ſubordinate; yet he was left with full authority by that governor, in capital caſes; which was here the ſame thing, as to all the ends and purpoſes of his acting, as if he had really acted by his own proper authority.

CHAP. II.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, *was crucify'd.*

TO the end the ſufferings of *Chriſt*, which more immediately preceded his death, might be better aſcertain'd, it was thought fit by the compilers of the creed to mention the particular time of them, with reſpect to the civil magiſtrate under whom he ſuffer'd. But there being an extraordinary circumſtance relating to the manner of his ſufferings, it was no leſs proper to the ſame end, that this too ſhould be ſpecify'd, and is accordingly here ſpecify'd in our profeſſing, that under *Pontius Pilate* Chriſt was *crucify'd*. And it might indeed have been mention'd, under the former head, as an additional argument of God's over-ruling providence, in the ſufferings of *Chriſt* under that govenor, that *Chriſt* was to ſuffer after this manner; for it being foretold, that he ſhould ſo ſuffer [*], and crucifixion being a *Roman* puniſhment, and not at that time in uſe among the Jews, had they been left to their own method of putting our Saviour to death, this circumſtance of his ſufferings, previous to it, might not, it is probable, have correſponded with the prediction. Now tho' a power in the Jews, at that time of ſtoning malefactors, has been contended for by ſome learned men; yet they acknowledge a power of crucifying, a manner of putting malefactors to death, in particular remarkable for the cruelty and ignominy of it, was out of their hands. Whatever judicial authority they ſtill retain'd, or exercis'd, with reſpect to delinquents, as to other kinds of puniſhment; yet as to this kind, it muſt be allow'd, that, according to their own confeſſion, *it was not lawful for them to put any one to death* [†]. Some have thought, indeed, that when *Pilate* refers them to judge *Chriſt* according to their own law, he is to be underſtood as ſpeaking ironically, by way of inſulting them for the loſs of that judicial power and anthority, wherewith, as a ſovereign people, they were before inveſted. But others have been of opinion, that they had ſtill a power, eſpecially in caſes which were nor capital, and even in ſome which were capital, of inflicting puniſhment. Upon any of the foregoing ſuppoſitions, it appears, that the ſcepter was then either wholly, or in great meaſure departed from *Judah*.

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[*] *Zach.* 12. 10. *Pſal.* 22. 17. *Deut.* 21. 23. To which may be added the typical repreſentations of the wood, upon which *Abraham* prepar'd to ſacrifice *Iſaac.* Of the brazen ſerpent, *John* 3. 14. And of the paſchal lamb, *Exod.* 12. 46.

[†] *John* 18. 31, 32.

IF we deſcend to aſſign the more particular reaſons, why our bleſſed Saviour ſuffer'd upon the croſs; it may be ſaid,

1. THAT in ſuffering this kind of puniſhment, he gave us the greateſt example of fortitude and a patient ſubmiſſion to the will of God; and which was proper to animate us, not only againſt the fear of death in general, but of death under the moſt formidable and ignominious circumſtances. It is in regard to the force of this example, that the apoſtle exhorts us to perſevere with patience and reſolution in all the duties of the chriſtian life; directing us to *look unto Jeſus, the author and finiſher of our faith, who for the joy that was ſet before him, endur'd the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame* [*].

2. IF the ſufferings of *Chriſt* were, as ſuch, a meritorious cauſe of our redemption, we have ſtill a ſtronger aſſurance of the merit and efficacy of them to that end, from his ſuffering after a manner, which was, at once, moſt inſupportable to ſenſe, and moſt ſhameful, according to the common notion men had every where of it. As in both reſpects it was a curſed death, it was moſt proper to denote, how *Chriſt was made a curſe for us* [†]. It was ſo reputed by the Jews, who, if any malefactors among them ſuffer'd another kind of death, were to be buried; whereas burial was not permitted to thoſe, who had been crucify'd. And it appears both from a paſſage in the prophet *Jeremy* [‡], and one in *Joſephus* [**], that the Jews apprehended nothing more infamous or terrible, than the want of burial.

IF it be queſtion'd, why this kind of death is reputed ſo very execrable, the anſwer is obvious, with reſpect to the nature of it, conſider'd as a moſt cruel and painful death; but as to the general opinion [††], which obtain'd concerning it, as a moſt infamous death, we muſt ſeek, perhaps, for a reaſon, not ſo much in the nature of it, as in the ſignification, which, on one account or other, had been by ſome common agreement appropriated to it: Which (tho' it is not neceſſary, nor poſſible, in all caſes, to diſcover the origin of common opinion) might, perhaps ariſe from hence, that he who was condemn'd to the puniſhment of the croſs, was expos'd to a more open and publick, to which I may add, permanent view, or was thereby repreſented as deſerving to be farther remov'd, than ordinary malefactors, from any * communication with the reſt of mankind.

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[*] *Heb.* 12. 2. [†] *Deut.* 21. 22. [‡] *Jer.* 16. 4.

[**] To which *Bochart* refers for the following obſervation. *Sepulturâ carere apud Judæos habita eſt ſumma calamitas; & eam negare ſumma crudelitas.*

[††] *Mortem hanc Homerus*, Odyſſ. 10. *(item Ph.) vocat* μὴ καθαρὸν *(impuram) & Euſtathius* μιαρὸν *(fœdam.) Crux erat ſervile ſupplicium, & mors turpiſſima dicitur. Tum*, Sap. 2. 20. *Tum in catalectis Virgilianis, in Senecâ* ſtipes infamis, Epiſt. 101. *& à Livio*, l. 14. Lignum infœlix. Pol. E. Boch.

3. Upon all theſe accounts, *Chriſt*, in ſuffering the puniſhment of the croſs, gave us the moſt ſenſible demonſtration of God's hatred to ſin. If when he appear'd in the perſon of a ſinner, and in order to be a ſacrifice for ſin, no puniſhment was thought ſufficient to appeaſe the wrath of a juſt and avenging God, but, of all others, the moſt cruel, and the moſt ſhameful that could be inflicted; what hopes can there be to us of eſcaping the ſevereſt effects of divine juſtice, who have already ſo often, and ſo highly offended againſt it? If God ſpared not his own ſon, conſider'd in the circumſtances of a ſinner, but ſuffer'd him to be cut off after ſo painful and ignominious a manner, what apprehenſions of terror ought we not to be under, if we do not ſincerely repent of our ſins, and forſake them, *leſt he alſo ſpare not us?*

The apoſtle therefore improves this very conſideration to ſhew, how neceſſary it is that we ſhould mortify our ſinful diſpoſitions or habits, if we would really attain the ends for which *Chriſt* was crucify'd, or have any benefit by them: *Who himſelf bore our ſins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead unto ſin, ſhould live unto God.*

Yet we are not to attribute the pains which *Chriſt* ſuffer'd upon the croſs wholly to his crucifixion; how cruel ſoever that kind of death was to them who ſuffer'd it. As thoſe parts of the body, the hands and the feet, which are moſt nervous and ſenſible of pain, were pierc'd through with the nails that faſtned them to the croſs; yet not ſo as to occaſion thoſe violent convulſions, which might procure immediate death; for it was ſome time before they expir'd, under the agonies of them. Yet, it muſt be acknowledg'd, there were *ſundry kinds of death*; which the primitive martyrs ſuffer'd, conſider'd in themſelves, no leſs painful and terrible to human apprehenſion. We muſt ſeek, therefore, for ſome other cauſe of that inexpreſſible anguiſh our Saviour felt upon the croſs, than barely from his ſuffering the death of the croſs. For tho' it ſhould be granted, that not only the curious original formation, but the exquiſite order and ſtate of his body at that time, occaſion'd by his leading a life perfectly innocent and regular, might have given him the greateſt ſenſe of pain, yet the principal reaſon, why *no ſorrow was ever like unto his ſorrow*, ſeems rather to have taken its riſe from certain conflicts, which he felt more immediately in his mind, than from thoſe he was only ſenſible of, by occaſion of his bodily ſufferings.

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* *Ratio infamiæ hæc eſſe videtur. Quòd qui ſuſpenditur ligno iſto ſymbolo ſublevationis in altum, quaſi execrabilis mundo (& indignus qui terram pedibus premat) exturbetur & eliminetur.* ibid.

In order to account for that horror, and thoſe moſt grievous ſenſations, which he ſo viſibly diſcover'd, even before his crucifixion; when *his ſoul was exceeding ſorrowful, even unto death*; *when he ſweat, as if it were drops of blood*, and pray'd in ſuch an earneſt and vehement manner to God; *Father, if it be poſſible, let this cup paſs from me*. And when afterwards his body was nail'd to the croſs, he was under the agonies which occaſion'd that paſſionate remonſtrance to his Father; *My God, my God! why haſt thou forſaken me?* Some are of opinion, that the devil, at that time, collected all his force, in order to fill his mind with the moſt diſmal terrifying ſcenes of horror, and, if that had been poſſible, of deſpair. And this opinion, indeed, appears to have ſome grounds in the words of our Saviour to his crucifiers, while he was upon the croſs; *This is your hour, and the power of darkneſs*.

Others have thought (tho' both theſe opinions may very well conſiſt) that the exquiſite ſenſe of pain, which our Lord felt both upon the croſs, and in the garden, was occaſion'd by the perfect and penetrating light, which then diffus'd itſelf in his mind, at once concerning the guilt and demerit of ſin, and the wrath of an incens'd God: Of ſin, for which he was at the inſtant atoneing; and of the divine wrath, to which he was then actually making an atonement. To which we may add, as a farther reaſon of his extraordinary anguiſh, a moſt ſenſible concern upon his foreſeeing, that, notwithſtanding both the merit and cruel manner of his death, it would not have the effect he deſign'd by it, on a great part of mankind; nay, that many who might believe in his name, would occaſionally, by not complying with the terms, which alone could entitle them to the benefits of his death, thereby incur the greater damnation. This proſpect, to one of ſo beneficent a diſpoſition, of ſo great tenderneſs, humanity, and love to mankind, may very naturally be ſuppos'd to have excited in his mind, ſtill a more pungent and ſenſible regret.

Chap. III.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, *was crucify'd, dead.*

THO' the crucifixion of *Chriſt* did, in the deſign of it, and according to the common event of that kind of puniſhment in other caſes, ſuppoſe the death of *Chriſt*; yet ſince his death was not neceſſarily conſequent upon it; (for he might, as the Jews after ſo inſulting a manner, call'd upon him to do, have come down from the croſs, and ſav'd himſelf) it was requiſite, on this account, that his death ſhould have been diſtinctly ſpecify'd in the creed, and ought indeed, for ſeveral other reaſons, to be conſider'd under a ſeparate head, from that of his crucifixion.

For the better explication of ſo important a point, and as our redemption is, in a more immediate and peculiar manner, attributed to the death of *Chriſt*, concerning which, we ought, for that reaſon, to have the moſt clear and explicit notions, whereof we are capable, I ſhall proceed according to the following method.

I. I ſhall ſhew, that as *Chriſt*, in fact, ſuffer'd the puniſhment of the croſs; ſo, according to what we here farther profeſs, he did alſo, in a true and proper ſenſe, die upon the croſs.

II. I ſhall conſider, how far, or in what reſpects the death of *Chriſt* was neceſſary towards our redemption.

III. Whether his death were a proper ſacrifice.

IV. Whether it was a ſacrifice, whereby he may properly be ſaid to have made ſatisfaction to the divine juſtice.

V. Whether the benefits of his death were deſign'd to be of univerſal extent.

VI. What were the effects of *Chriſt*'s death, as having a more immediate relation to his own perſon.

I. I am to ſhew, that as *Chriſt*, in fact, ſuffer'd the puniſhment of the croſs; ſo, according to what we here profeſs, he did alſo, in a true and proper ſenſe, die upon the croſs. Concerning the truth of his death, we have all the evidence that any matter of fact is capable of.

Death conſiſts in a diſſolution of the principal parts, or organs of the body; ſo that neither they, nor any other leſs noble parts, in dependence on them, can any longer operate, or perform their reſpective functions. In conſequence of which, according to the laws of union between the ſoul and the body, the ſoul can no longer inform the body, or maintain any communication with it, or any part of it; but retires from it, and ſubſiſts ſomewhere; it is, in this place, of no importance to enquire where, in a ſeparate ſtate.

That the pains which *Chriſt* ſuffer'd, were of an intenſeneſs and force, ſufficient to cauſe ſuch a diſſolution of the principal parts of his body, will not be diſputed; whether we conſider the manner of his death, or the extraordinary circumſtances, which contributed to highten the pains of it; and which were, indeed, ſo great, that *Pilate*, who did not underſtand the true cauſe, *marvell'd*, that he was dead ſo ſoon. By which means, there providentially happen'd, an accompliſhment of the prophecy, that *a bone of him ſhould not be broken*; it appearing that he was dead, when they came to break the legs of the two malefactors, who were crucify'd with him.

They who wiſh'd and conſpir'd his death, and were the inſtruments of procuring it, made no doubt of it; tho', for theſe reaſons, there is all the probability in the world to ſuppoſe, they would take all requiſite care poſſible to ſatisfy themſelves, that he was truly dead; which this farther circumſtance ſtill remov'd all poſſible ſuſpicion of, that the ſoldiers pierc'd his ſide, (tho' they did not break his legs) without the leaſt appearance of life, or ſenſibility of pain in him. And tho' it may be juſtly inferr'd, in conſequence of the natural laws of union between the ſoul and the body, that there was not only a ceſſation of the animal œconomy, but that his ſoul too was actually ſeparated from his body; yet to give a farther confirmation to the truth of this point, it is ſaid, that, having *commended his ſpirit into the hands of his father, he gave up the ghoſt* *.

If *Chriſt* did not truly die, the end of his crucifixion had not been fully attain'd; for tho' we may conſider this as one conſiderable part of his ſacrifice; yet that which finiſh'd it, that which anſwer'd the types concerning him, particularly that of the Paſſover, in conformity to which, the apoſtle ſays to the *Corinthians*, *Chriſt, our Paſſover, is ſlain* †. That which diſcover'd to us, the ſatisfaction due to the divine juſtice, and demanded by it, was paid; that, upon which the original inſtitution, and continued obſervance of the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, can be of any ſignificancy, is, that *Chriſt* truly ſuffer'd death, or, in the prophetical language, was *cut off out of the land of the living*, and *made his ſoul an offering for ſin*. Accordingly, to ſhew that *Chriſt* did ſuffer death, not in a fictitious or metaphorical, but in a true ſenſe, the efficacy of his death, as the meritorious cauſe of our redemption, is ſo frequently inſiſted upon in the holy ſcriptures. I ſhall only cite two paſſages (referring to others in the margin *) out of the epiſtle to the *Romans* on this occaſion, where St. *Paul* tells them; *When we were enemies, we were reconcil'd to God by the death of his Son* †. And afterwards; that, *To this end, Chriſt both dy'd, and roſe, and reviv'd, that he might be the Lord of the dead and the living* ‡.

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* *Luke* 23. 46. † 1 *Cor.* 5. 7.

II. I am to conſider how far, or in what reſpects *Chriſt*'s death was neceſſary to our redemption. I do not here enquire, whether God, in his infinite wiſdom, might not poſſibly have found out ſome other method of redeeming mankind; or, whether he might not, by right of his ſovereign prerogative, have pardon'd the ſins of men, and remitted the puniſhment due to them, without any previous condition or means to that end? No, the neceſſity, which I here intend, was not abſolute antecedently in the nature of it, but only in conſequence of the will and determinate counſel of God to ſave men by this method, and of the ſeveral predictions contain'd in the holy ſcriptures to that end. Which will and determinate counſel of God was alſo, in the natural order of our ideas, conſequential to God's foreſight, that men left to their liberty, (and ſo far he might juſtly determine to leave them) would, at the time foretold, crucify and kill the *Lord of glory*; except we were to ſuppoſe, that God, in order to accompliſh his deſigns, would put men, who were to be his inſtruments towards the accompliſhment of them, under a neceſſity of ſinning; from whence one argument may be drawn, why our bleſſed Saviour could not, conſiſtently with his deſign of coming into the world, to be a ſacrifice for ſin, and to die for us, have appear'd in it to that end, either ſooner or later. For it being neceſſary, as he was alſo to diſcharge the office of a prophet, that he ſhould inſtruct mankind, not only by his example, but his precepts, and give the moſt full and unqueſtionable atteſtation of that character, by his working of miracles: It is probable, that in no other age, nor among any other people, but that of the Jews, when the meaſure of their iniquity ſeem'd to be fill'd up, there could have been found any perſons ſo abandon'd to all ſenſe both of gratitude and goodneſs, as to conſpire and procure the death of one, who had *approv'd himſelf among them*, by the moſt unblameable life, and edifying converſation; *by ſo many ſigns, and wonders, and miracles*; wherein the effects of his power, and of his love to mankind, were all along equally conſpicuous.

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* *Col.* 1. 21. *Heb.* 2. 4. *Phil.* 2. 8, 9. *Rom.* 5. 8. † *Rom.* 5. 10. ‡ *Ch.* 14. 9.

The difficulty lies in reconciling the neceſſity, on any ſuppoſition of *Chriſt*'s dying for us, with the liberty of human will. For if men, which this liberty ſuppoſes they might not, had not, in fact, by their abuſe of it, put *Chriſt* to death, then it was poſſible that the decree of God, and all the predictions in ſcripture concerning his death, might have been fruſtrated. Or if God certainly foreſaw they would chuſe the worſe part, then their choice of it, which is ſaid to argue an inconſiſtency in the nature of the thing, would, notwithſtanding their ſuppos'd liberty, have been abſolutely neceſſary.

Some have thought, there is no method of accounting for God's certain fore-knowledge of future events depending on the free determination of human will, and therefore have deny'd that they can be certainly foreknown. They farther object, that this is no more an argument to prove, that the knowledge of God is not therefore infinite; than it proves, that he is not omnipotent, becauſe there may be ſome things ſuppos'd, which are not poſſible objects of power. Why then ſhould it be thought any defect in his knowledge, if the object about which it is pretended to be converſant, be, in the nature of it, impoſſible to be known?

But this way of arguing cannot, in the firſt place, be juſt; becauſe it lies againſt a known and acknowledg'd fact, God having, by his fore-knowledge of them, abſolutely foretold ſeveral events, which, at the time determin'd, accordingly came to paſs. Had he foretold only ſuch things, as depended on the good uſe men might make of their liberty, this might eaſily be ſolv'd, from God's over-ruling their choice, by ſuch a ſtrong impulſe of his grace, as would certainly over-balance that of their own corrupt inclinations. But when ſinful actions, committed with the moſt heinous and aggravating circumſtances, are foretold, as they frequently are in the holy ſcriptures, there the prediction of them can only be reſolv'd into the certainty of God's fore-knowing what way men would take, when left to the free exerciſe of their own liberty.

As to what is ſaid concerning the omnipotence of God, to ſhew, that future contingences are not poſſible objects of knowledge, or that no defect is imply'd in the divine knowledge, from God's being ignorant of them, we anſwer, that this illuſtration is not parallel or juſt. The reaſon why we ſay ſome things are not poſſible objects of the divine power, is, that it implies an expreſs contradiction to ſuppoſe, that they ſhould exiſt. But whatever difficulty there may be in conceiving, how God can certainly fore-know, what choice man, left to his liberty, will make; yet ſuch a knowledge cannot, in the nature, or any neceſſary conſeuqence of it, imply an impoſſibility; as it does, in direct terms, that the power of God ſhould cauſe any thing to be, and not to be at the ſame time. If it ſhould be ſaid, indeed, that God may have a certain or determinate knowledge of an uncertain event, this, according to our natural way of conceiving things, would imply a plain inconſiſtency; as ſuppoſing the knowledge of what is not, or of no object. When we ſay therefore, God, by the plenitude of his knowledge, certainly fore-knows future contingences, we intend that the event, as to him, who knows all the ſecret powers and ſprings of action, is certain; tho' it may depend, and, in that reſpect, is call'd contingent, antecedently on a free contingent cauſe. As our Saviour perfectly foreſaw *Peter* would deny him, knowing the diſpoſition this apoſtle was in, and would continue in, tho' his denyal was an act of his own free choice.

OR it may be ſaid, that certainty, or uncertainty, when apply'd to any event, does not abſolutely relate to the nature of it, but only has reſpect, properly ſpeaking, to the perſon who is ſaid to be certain or uncertain concerning it. The certainty therefore, and the neceſſity of any event, may admit of a very diſtinct conſideration. Neceſſity relates to the nature of things, abſolutely conſider'd; certainty, to the evidence of them, in relation to the perſon, to whoſe mind they are objected. In this latter caſe, it was evident to the mind of our Saviour, that *Peter* would deny him, tho' there was no antecedent neceſſity, in the reaſon of the thing, why *Peter* ſhould deny him.

THE ground of this diſtinction appears from hence, that the nature of things in themſelves, abſolutely conſider'd, ſuffers no change from any accidental reſpect or denomination. For if there was an abſolute previous cauſe of their exiſtence, they are neceſſary; if there was only a poſſibility of their exiſting, they are contingent; certainty then, and neceſſity, are two different things, and admit of very different conſiderations; ſo that what is apply'd to one of them, cannot, without deſtroying the diſtinction of neceſſary and contingent, be apply'd to the other. What, in the nature of it, is neceſſary, admits of no change, on account of the different manner, according to which the mind apprehends it, but is equally neceſſary at all times. And yet the very ſame thing, according to the different light or evidence, wherein it appears to the minds of different perſons, may be properly term'd certain, or uncertain, at the ſame time, and may indeed be ſo to the ſame perſon at ſeveral times. Nay, farther to ſhew the difference between the neceſſity and certainty of things, and that neceſſity reſpects the nature of them, abſolutely conſider'd, certainty, the relation wherein they ſtand to the mind, even things neceſſary in their own nature, or depending on a ſeries of natural cauſes, acting according to the eſtabliſh'd order of things, may yet be uncertain, with reſpect to thoſe who have only an indiſtinct, or leſs perfect knowledge of the manner how they ſhall come to paſs. An eclipſe, for inſtance of the ſun or moon, will, at ſuch a time, neceſſarily happen; at leaſt, God, who does not deſign to interpoſe by a particular will, to prevent, in this caſe, the effects of a general law, foreſees it will neceſſarily happen. Such an event, notwithſtanding, may not only be call'd uncertain, in reference to thoſe, who are not capable of making an exact calculation of the time when it ſhould happen, but alſo to thoſe, who being able to calculate the time exactly, yet cannot be certain of the event, becauſe uncertain whether God, after all, may not poſſibly exert an over-ruling power to fruſtrate it. What ſeems therefore to perplex the minds of men upon this head, has been their confounding neceſſity and certainty, as if they convey'd the very ſame ideas to the mind, or indifferently imported the ſame thing: Whereas it appears that things are properly conſider'd as certain, or uncertain, on account of the external relation they have to the underſtanding; as neceſſary or contingent, with reſpect to the nature of them, conſider'd in themſelves. Which occaſions ſuch a mighty difference, that things, in the nature of them neceſſary, may yet, in a proper ſenſe, be term'd uncertain; as things, on the other hand, may be term'd certain, which are, in the nature of them, contingent, according to the different light wherein they appear to the mind.

It is not, then, a juſt way of arguing, that ſome things may be conceiv'd impoſſible to the power of God; therefore other things, and, in particular, future contingencies, may, without ſuppoſing any thing injurious to the perfection of his nature, be thought impervious to his knowledge; becauſe, when we ſpeak of things as impoſſible to his power, we mean ſuch things as are really ſo, and in no reſpect poſſible. But the pretence, upon which it is deny'd, that God can know future contingencies, is obviated, by our conſidering what is objected to the divine knowledge, in different reſpects. In one of which, as certainty is apply'd to the nature of things, abſolutely conſider'd; we grant it impoſſible there ſhould be a determinate knowledge of what, as to the event, is indeterminate. Yet it does not therefore follow, that ſuch an event, tho', in the nature of it, contingent, (and which may therefore happen) cannot be objected, in ſo full and clear a light to the divine intellect, as may render it certainly fore-known to God, that, all circumſtances conſider'd, it will happen.

There is no neceſſity, then, of having recourſe here to a ſolution, which ſome divines have thought neceſſary, that God decrees all future events depending on human will, and in his decree, foreſees them. For, beſides that preſcience may conſiſt with the freedom of human will, upon the principles already laid down, this principle renders the divine œconomy, by too evident and obvious a conſequence, chargeable with the ſins of men; as it ſuppoſes his decree to be directly influential on their conduct, and prior, in order of time, to his knowledge of what they would do. Whereas his fore-knowledge of things, is only to be conſider'd as an act of ſimple intelligence, which no more affects the thing he fore-knows will happen, than his after-knowledge affects what has already happen'd; but rather ſuppoſes, in the order of our ideas, the good or ill uſe of human liberty, antecedent to his fore-knowledge. Upon this hypotheſis, the holineſs of God is acquitted, whatever offences moral agents, his creatures, may perpetrate againſt him; as are his juſtice and goodneſs, in decreeing to puniſh them for ſuch offences. But to ſay, that God antecedently decreed to over-rule the wills of men in ſuch a manner, that they ſhould invincibly ſin againſt him, leſt his decree might poſſibly, after all, not operate or be fruſtrated, is not only to make him the author of ſin, but to repreſent him as laying a ſcheme for the puniſhment of ſinners, which can no more be reconcil'd with the cleareſt ideas we have of his juſtice and goodneſs, than to ſay, he is the author of ſin, can conſiſt with his attribute of holineſs. Of the two errors, it were perhaps leſs injurious to the honour of God, to aſſert the nature of human liberty to be ſuch, that he cannot certainly fore-know what way men will take, than to reſolve his fore-knowledge of it into ſuch principles, as directly tend to deſtroy the perfections of his own nature; and, I may add, by putting men under a neceſſity of ſinning, to deſtroy the very nature and grounds of all moral or religious actions.

It was therefore a true notion of *Origen*, and agreeable to the ſentiments, if I miſtake not, of all the fathers before and after him, till the time of St. *Auſtin*, who, in the heat of diſpute with *Pelagius*, advanc'd many things inconſiſtent with his own former principles, that God's fore-knowledge of things future, was not the cauſe of their exiſting; but their future exiſtence the cauſe of his fore-knowing them *. Fore-knowledge, indeed, is a relative term, and does not ſo much create, as ſuppoſe the object of it. And therefore an eminent fataliſt † is cited by his learned adverſary ‡, as ingenuouſly confeſſing, that *it cannot be truly ſaid the fore-knowledge of God is the cauſe of any thing.* The reaſon whereof follows, and is the ſame, in other words, with that I have here aſſign'd. *Fore-knowledge is knowledge; and knowledge depends on the exiſtence of things known, and not they on it.*

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* Οὐ τὴν πρόγνωσιν αἰτίαν τῶν γενομένων, τὸ δὲ ἐσόμενον αἴτιον, *&c.* Orig. Philoc.

† Mr. *Hobbes*. ‡ Bramh. p. 665.

In ſhort, tho' God perfectly foreſees all things future, tho' of a contingent nature, he foreſees them as contingent. Free actions are repreſented to his mind, as done freely; and neceſſary actions, as flowing from a neceſſary cauſe. Which notion of his preſcience, inſtead of deſtroying it, as inconſiſtent with human liberty, directly tends to confirm and eſtabliſh the conſiſtency of preſcience and human liberty. And there is no more difficulty, indeed, in conceiving how God ſhould fore-know what will happen, without any influx or cauſality, on his part, upon the event, than how, without any ſuch influx or cauſality, he ſhould know, in the ſequel, what has happen'd.

I ſhall but mention one other way of reconciling the certainty of God's preſcience with human liberty, and that is upon a ſuppoſition, that God may ſuſpend, in certain caſes, the acts of his knowledge, as he does continually thoſe of his power. For if it be no diminution to his attribute of omnipotence, that he does not exert his power to the utmoſt force of it at all times, or do all things that he can poſſibly do, they think it no more tends to the injury of his omniſcience to ſay, that he does not know all things, which yet, if he pleas'd to repreſent them to his own mind, he might know.

But, in the firſt place, this argument is only advanc'd to obviate a conſequence in relation to the influx, which the fore-knowledge of God may be ſuppos'd to have upon the event. Which conſequence, it appears from what has been ſaid, there is no neceſſity of admitting; and, for this reaſon, the argument itſelf is unneceſſary; neither is it juſt or pertinent, with reſpect to the manner wherein it is propos'd. The omniſcience of God importing his actual knowledge of all things, his omnipotence extending to ſuch things, which as yet are not actually the ſubjects of it, nor ever, perhaps, may have an actual exiſtence: There cannot then, on occaſion of this difference in the terms, be any true or parallel conſequences drawn to the purpoſe here deſign'd, from a compariſon of them.

I have inſiſted the longer upon this point, to ſhew, that as the death of *Chriſt* was neceſſary, in order to the accompliſhment of thoſe prophecies, whereby it was declar'd, that he ſhould be put to death; ſo the ſins of thoſe, by whoſe *wicked hands he was crucify'd and ſlain,* are not chargeable, on any antecedent decree of

God over-ruling them, to commit ſo horrid a crime; tho' God foreſaw, that, if left to themſelves, and ſo far, I have obſerv'd, he might juſtly determine to leave them, they would commit it.

2. It was neceſſary that *Chriſt* ſhould ſuffer, not only in conſequence of the predictions in the holy ſcriptures to this end, but becauſe it was neceſſary, in the nature of the thing, and antecedently to thoſe predictions, or without any regard to them, that ſome valuable atonement for ſin ſhould be made to an offended God, before he could, conſiſtently with the regard owing both to his holineſs and majeſty, admit ſinners to any terms of pardon or reconciliation. Wiſe and good princes do ſometimes, indeed, publiſh acts of grace and indemnity to their delinquent ſubjects, but are always careful to do it in ſuch a manner, as may neither give any future encouragement to their miſconduct or defection, nor leſſen their own dignity; and therefore generally, at leaſt, make one or other of them, who are moſt obnoxious, a ſacrifice, and example of publick juſtice. The reaſon why God would not let the *ſinner go free*, without ſome acknowledgment of the guilt and demerit of ſin, (and none was ſo capable of making any acknowledgment ſuitable to his divine majeſty, as his own Son, by becoming a ſacrifice for ſin) will appear afterwards. A queſtion ariſes, by the way, which I ſhall take an occaſion, in a few words, of ſpeaking to; Whether the death of *Chriſt* was abſolutely neceſſary, in the nature of it, to reconcile ſinners to God, or only a wiſe method, appointed by the arbitrary will of God, to that end? It is pleaded for the neceſſity of it; that God is juſt, and that juſtice conſiſts in rendring to every one his due. Puniſhment therefore, in the natural order of things, being due to ſinners; it is neceſſary that God ſhould puniſh them, if not in their own perſons, yet in the perſon of him, who is willing to take the puniſhment due to them, upon himſelf. And death being the proper wages of ſin, it is no leſs neceſſary that he ſhould die, than that he ſhould ſuffer, on any other account, in the ſinner's ſtead; eſpecially if ſuch a one can be found, who has power over his own life; for then no injury is done either to himſelf, to the rights of ſociety, or the ſovereign power of God; *in whoſe hand is the ſoul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.*

This notion of punitive juſtice, ſaid to be founded in the natural reaſon of the thing, is, in the opinion of thoſe who contend for it, ſupported by ſeveral authorities in the holy ſcriptures; particularly where it is ſaid, [*] *God will by no means clear*

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[*] *Exod.* 34. 7.

the guilty; and *it is juſt with God, that they who do ſuch things* (things ſinful and offenſive to him) *are worthy of death.*

They argue farther for the neceſſity of a punitive juſtice in God, from his attribute of holineſs: Which renders all ſin, and all the workers of iniquity hateful to him. And hatred is a powerful motive, eſpecially where it is ſtrong, natural, and frequently provok'd, to puniſhment, and where the effects of it will diſcover themſelves after a manner agreeable to the ſtrict rules of juſtice. Now it is agreed on both ſides, that God, as he hates ſin, may alſo juſtly puniſh it. And what ſtill gives the ſinner greater reaſon to expect that he will puniſh, another paſſion, in the nature of it highly provoking, is by occaſion of ſin attributed to him, and aſſign'd as the reaſon of his puniſhing; *I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, viſiting the iniquity* *. *He is a holy God, he is a jealous God, and therefore will not forgive tranſgreſſion and ſin* †. But the force and natural effects of this paſſion, are no where more fully or elegantly deſcrib'd, than by *Nahum* the *Elkoſhite*; *God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth*; —— *He will not at all acquit the wicked* ‡.

For theſe reaſons, ſome pious and learned men have been of opinion, that God puniſhes ſin by a neceſſity of nature; and that he cannot, without acting contrary to his eſſential perfections, let the ſinner go free. And that it was therefore abſolutely neceſſary, in order to the redemption of mankind, that *Chriſt* ſhould ſuffer, by taking the puniſhment due to them as ſinners, upon himſelf; except ſome other method could have been contriv'd proper to appeaſe God's juſtice, whether conſider'd in its own nature, in relation to his holineſs, or as inſtigated, in both reſpects, by his hatred and jealouſy againſt ſin.

On the other hand, ſome will have it, that, in conſequence of God's deſign to redeem mankind, the death of *Chriſt* was neceſſary, not in ſtrict juſtice, but as it was the wiſeſt method that could be propos'd or employ'd to the great ends that God had in redeeming them; which were to make them more holy and obedient, and to *purify to himſelf a peculiar people zealous of good works.* For hereby God gave the moſt evident demonſtration, that could poſſibly be given, at once of his hatred to ſin, and his love to ſinners, and of the danger, if they ſhould ſtill continue in their ſins, of their ſuffering the miſerable conſequences of them. All theſe were deſigns worthy of the divine wiſdom in the death of *Chriſt*: And which it is thought, without any regard to the juſtice of God, might be ſufficient to vindicate the ſcheme of his grace, in giving up *Chriſt* to die for us. It may not, however, be here improper to conſider a little the force of thoſe arguments, which have been offer'd, on the other ſide, for the neceſſity of a punitive juſtice in God, and whether they be really ſo ſtrong, that no good or ſatisfactory anſwer can be given to them.

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* *Exod.* 20. 5. † *Joſh.* 24. 19. ‡ *Nahum* 1. 2, 3.

1. It is readily granted, that God is juſt; that juſtice is a perfection natural and eſſential to him; and that the ſinner may be juſtly puniſh'd: But ſtill this only proves, that when God puniſhes, he puniſhes juſtly; but not that juſtice obliges him to puniſh. A Prince is juſt in executing the law upon delinquents; yet it is no imputation on his juſtice, in certain caſes, to remit the puniſhment due to them. Nay, where the ends of government, or reaſons of common intereſt and ſafety, do not oblige him to puniſh ſuch delinquents; if he be a good Prince, he will not, he ought not to puniſh them, merely for the ſake of puniſhing, or in order to gratify an arbitrary revenge.

Justice then, however natural to God, if we may argue from the clearest notions of juſtice, when apply'd to men, does not neceſſarily require that he ſhould puniſh, but only ſuppoſes that he may puniſh. For a thing may be term'd natural, on two accounts; either with reſpect to the conſtant, uniform, and neceſſary operation of it; in which ſenſe, it is natural for fire to burn; or as it is agreeable to the nature of its ſubject; according to which ſenſe, it is natural for a man to laugh, to eat, drink, or ſleep. All which actions may, notwithſtanding, without deſtroying human nature, be omitted, on many occaſions.

In the former reſpect, punitive juſtice does not appear natural to God, becauſe he muſt then neceſſarily puniſh the ſinner, and, at all times, ſo ſoon as he deſerves puniſhment. In the latter reſpect, punitive juſtice, we ſay, is natural to God; as in puniſhing, he does what is highly agreeable to his nature; what is ſtrictly juſt; but as to which, nevertheleſs, he was perfectly free, if we conſider what is done properly as to the ſubject matter of juſtice, either to act, or not to act. Thus omnipotence is an eſſential perfection of God; but it is not therefore neceſſary, that he ſhould actually exert it at all times, or perhaps to the utmoſt extent at any time; but only that when he does exert it, nothing can be conceiv'd capable of oppoſing his action.

We muſt diſtinguiſh therefore between the attributes of God, which denote the immanent and internal perfections of his nature; and ſuch as have reference to his operating externally; of which kind are his juſtice and mercy, the ſeveral acts whereof, he may either exert or forbear at pleaſure. Tho' when he does act in relation to either of them, his action muſt always bear the character of the attribute from which it flows.

In conſequence of this diſtinction, it is queſtion'd, why the juſtice of God ſhould be more eſſential to him than his mercy, in the reſpective operations of them. For mercy is allow'd to be one of his attributes; and if he be naturally merciful, and always oblig'd to act according to the tenour or motion of theſe two attributes, he will have two natural, and, if the contrary opinion hold true, neceſſary motions continually oppoſing one another; one which inclines him to puniſh a ſinner, the other to pardon him. The conſequence of which competition between theſe two attributes would be, that he could neither puniſh, nor pardon.

There ſeems to be no other way of removing this difficulty, but by ſaying, tho' both theſe attributes eminently belong to the divine nature; yet as to their external operations, they are not neceſſary, but entirely under the direction of the divine will. As to what was argued from the holineſs of God, from his hatred and jealouſy, on occaſion of the ſins of men, it diſcovers, indeed, that ſin is, in the nature of it, highly provoking to God; but it is an argument of a great and generous mind, rather to pardon a provocation, than to revenge it; eſpecially where reaſons of ſafety or prudence do not require it ſhould be reveng'd.

Upon this principle then, to conclude what I have to ſay in relation to it, tho' *Chriſt* was puniſh'd for the ſins of men, and after a manner which ſatisfy'd the full demands of divine juſtice; tho' *it behoved him*, in order to preſerve the honour and authority of the laws of God, and for other wiſe ends of providence and grace, *thus to ſuffer*; yet, in the opinion of thoſe, I have here endeavour'd to repreſent the ſenſe of, juſtice, ſimply conſider'd in itſelf, did not abſolutely require, that he ſhould ſuffer.

III. Whether the death of *Chriſt* was a proper ſacrifice.

Since no ſinner can expiate for his own crimes, the notion of an expiatory ſacrifice muſt conſiſt, and was well known to the Jews to conſiſt herein, that the ſin of one or more perſons is transferr'd upon the head of the party ſuffering; or if a beaſt ſuffer, upon his head; not ultimately, *for it is impoſſible*, as the apoſtle argues, *that the blood of bulls, or of goats, ſhould take away ſin*; but in regard to the ſacrifice typically repreſented by it. This transferring of puniſhment was expreſs'd by many different phraſes in ſcripture, but which all, in effect, import the ſame thing. The ſacrifice was call'd *the ſin-offering*, *the atonement*, that whereby *reconciliation was made*; it was ſaid to be *for ſin*, *inſtead of ſin*, to *bear ſin*, that whereon *iniquity was laid*. All theſe ſacrificatory expreſſions are repeated and us'd in the New Teſtament. From whence we may certainly conclude, however the *Socinians* may endeavour to elude the natural force of them, that the death of *Chriſt* imply'd ſomething more, than that he was to be an example of patience, or than a condition of his being glorify'd, in order to give confirmation to the truth and divinity of his doctrine. For they plainly import, that he ſuffer'd, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, *for us*; that by virtue, and in conſideration of his ſufferings, and his becoming obedient unto death, we are reconcil'd to God, who will no longer impute thoſe treſpaſſes, for which he ſuffer'd, and dy'd, to us. There can be no arguing from the moſt natural, obvious, and receiv'd ſignification of words, if it may not be certainly inferr'd from theſe expreſſions, that *Chriſt*, in dying for us, was a ſacrifice, in the moſt ſtrict, and proper ſenſe of the word.

THERE was this peculiar to the ſacrifice of *Chriſt*, and herein one of his mediatorial offices chiefly conſiſted, that he was alſo our Prieſt; *He offer'd himſelf*, as our ſacrifice, *without ſpot to God* [*]. *He made his ſoul an offering for ſin* [†]. *He reconcil'd us in the body of his fleſh, through death* [‡]. *For every High Prieſt taken from among men, is ordain'd for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and ſacrifices for ſins* [**].

THERE was ſomething no leſs peculiar in his qualifications for this office. *He needed not*, being perfectly innocent, *to offer, as other High Prieſts, firſt for himſelf.* The dignity of his perſon gave alſo a value to his atonement. We could no more have been redeem'd by the blood of a ſinful man, than by the blood of bulls, or of goats, or of any *corruptible things*, as of *ſilver and gold*; but only by the blood of one, who had not render'd himſelf obnoxious to the juſtice or diſpleaſure of God, by any crime or demerit of his own. This qualification could only be found in the perſon of *Jeſus Chriſt*; by *whoſe precious blood* we were therefore *redeem'd, as of a lamb without blemiſh, and without ſpot* [††]. And therefore when other ſacrifices and offerings God *would not*, as ineffectual of themſelves to the great end for which ſacrifice was inſtituted, then did *Chriſt* propoſe to offer up himſelf for us men, and for our ſalvation. *Then, ſaid he, lo I come to do thy will, O God* [‡‡].

IV. WHETHER the death of *Chriſt* was a ſacrifice, whereby he might properly be ſaid to have made ſatisfaction to the divine juſtice. In order to reſolve this point after a more clear and diſtinct manner, it will be requiſite that we ſhould firſt conſider the true import of the word ſatisfaction, and then apply the proper notion of it to the ſufferings of *Chriſt*.

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[*] *Heb.* 9. 14.
[†] *Iſaiah* 53. 10.
[‡] *Coll.* 1. 21.
[**] *Heb.* 5. 1.
[††] 1 *Pet.* 1. 19.
[‡‡] *Heb.* 10. 9.

SATISFACTION, as referring to the death of *Chriſt*, is a word that no where occurs in the holy ſcriptures; and being capable of different ſenſes, ſome have contended againſt the uſe of it, as to this fundamental point, leſt it might be the occaſion of miſleading men into any falſe or dangerous notions concerning it.

BUT there is no ſuch inconvenience in uſing the term ſatisfaction, when we explain our ſenſe of it, and what all orthodox writers have underſtood by it, as theſe men ſeem to be apprehenſive of. If we go to the moſt natural and obvious ſenſe of the word, it imports ſomething done, upon a juſt demand of any perſon, ſufficient, or accepted by him as ſufficient, to the end for which it is done. In order therefore to apply it to the ſacrifice of *Chriſt*, we are only to conſider, whether the end propos'd was not, in all reſpects, attain'd by his ſacrifice.

THE end of *Chriſt* in dying for us, was to reconcile us to his Father, by making an atonement for the guilt of thoſe ſins, wherewith we ſtood perſonally charg'd. By this atonement, the full demands of God's juſtice were anſwer'd; who requir'd, that before he would admit ſinners to any terms of pardon, ſome valuable acknowledgment of their crimes ſhould be made to his offended majeſty. And ſince we could not in our own perſons make any ſuch acknowledgment, it was to be made in his ſacred perſon, as our ſurety, and to be accepted by God to all intents and purpoſes; as if we had really been capable of making it in our own perſons. To this end, *Chriſt took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the ſeed of Abraham. God gave him a body*, that he might perform all the actions proper to it, particularly, by ſhedding of blood, without which, by the divine appointment, there could be *no remiſſion*. He gave him, moreover, a ſoul, a human ſoul, to be *an offering for ſin*; and to render the actions both of his ſoul and body of greater value; he united the human nature in one perſon with the divine, which gave a dignity to his ſufferings above what any other union, or any other ſcheme of grace could have given. This perſon was to *bear our iniquities*; to *lay down his life a ranſom for us*; to *ſuffer for us in the fleſh*; to *redeem us*; to *bear our ſins in his own body*; to *ſuffer for our ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt*; *that he might bring us to God*.

ALL theſe expreſſions plainly denote, tho' we have not the word ſatisfaction in ſcripture, yet what we intend by it, namely, that the ſufferings of *Chriſt* in our ſtead were deſign'd in full payment of all the demands which the juſtice of God had upon ſinners; and that God, in conſideration of it, was pleas'd to remit the debt, they had perſonally incurr'd, *not imputing their treſpaſſes to them.* But, leſt we might ſtill be under any miſgiving apprehenſions, that God was not ſatisfy'd with this kind of payment, he has expreſſly declar'd his ſatisfaction to this end. We are aſſur'd by the Holy Spirit of God, that *we have redemption through the blood of Chriſt, even the remiſſion of ſins*; that *we are reconcil'd to the Father by his croſs, and in the body of his fleſh, through death*; that *he hath born our ſins in his own body*; and, *by his own blood entring once into the holy of holies, hath obtain'd eternal redemption for us.*

ACCORDING to our common notion of ſatisfying the demands of any perſon upon us, or upon any friend undertaking for us, what expreſſions could have been more proper to denote that plenary ſatisfaction which was made to the juſtice of God by the death of *Chriſt?* And tho' we do not ſay, that juſtice abſolutely requir'd, or antecedently to the will of God, that *Chriſt* ſhould ſuffer for the ſins of men; yet when God had determin'd, as juſtly he might do, upon this way of having an atonement made to his juſtice, it was properly a ſatisfaction to his juſtice, as if, in ſtrictneſs of juſtice, he had abſolutely requir'd it. The greateſt difficulty, in relation to the word, as apply'd to the ſacrifice of *Chriſt*, ſeems to lie here, that free and plenary ſatisfaction for a debt, imports, that there can be no farther demand upon the debtor. If *Chriſt* then hath fully ſatisfy'd for the ſins of men, how can it conſiſt with the juſtice of God, that ſinners ſhould ſtill be puniſh'd, and that many of them ſhall be puniſh'd to all eternity.

TO which it is anſwer'd, that it depending on the will of God, whether he would accept a vicarious puniſhment, he had power to preſcribe what conditions he pleas'd towards entitling men to the benefits of it. When he might abſolutely have refus'd to accept it, (for otherways, indeed, the redemption of mankind, on the part of God, had not been an act *of grace, but of debt)* he might certainly, at the ſame time, have propos'd ſuch terms of accepting it, as himſelf thought fit; eſpecially ſuch as were, in the nature of them, reaſonable, and apparently for the benefit of the party redeem'd; as all the evangelical ſtipulations confeſſedly are to the perſons, for whoſe redemption, and in whoſe ſtead, the ſufferings of *Chriſt* were accepted.

IF this anſwer do not ſatisfy, it may be ſaid, that *Chriſt*, who, by his own free and proper choice, was the ſponſor for mankind, might, as he ſaw cauſe, limit the benefits of his undertaking for them; provided it was ſtill, upon the whole matter, really beneficial to them. It is ſufficient to juſtify the term, ſatisfaction, that it was fully made to God, in the manner he was willing to accept it; and in reſpect to all the ends, which he who voluntarily undertook for us, propos'd and intended by it.

ANOTHER queſtion of affinity with this, is, whether *Chriſt*, by his death, could properly be ſaid to merit for us? In a ſtrict ſenſe, if by merit we underſtand, that the ſufferings of *Chriſt* were of that value, that God was oblig'd to accept them, as the condition of his pardoning the ſins of men, without his conſenting antecedently to accept them, there does not ſeem to be any ſuch notion of merit in the holy ſcriptures, nor any foundation for it in reaſon. But if by merit we underſtand, that, in conſequence of God's having agreed to accept the ſacrifice of *Chriſt* in full ſatisfaction for what was juſtly due from the ſinner, he did ſo accept it, then the ſacrifice of *Chriſt* had all the merit in it, and in all the circumſtances of it, which ſtrictly entitled him to the promis'd reward.

V. WHETHER the benefits of *Chriſt*'s death were deſign'd to be of univerſal extent? I ſhall firſt briefly conſider how far it is a doctrine reaſonable in itſelf to ſuppoſe the univerſal extent of *Chriſt*'s death; and, ſecondly, what foundation this doctrine has in ſcripture.

1. ON ſuppoſition that *Chriſt* was to die to make reconciliation to God for the ſins of men, it is reaſonable to conclude from the nature of the thing, that the benefits of his death ſhould extend to all men. As to the intrinſick value of it, both ſides are agreed it was ſufficient to this end. If then God limited the effects of it, this muſt have been done by virtue of ſome particular decree, or exception. But what could be the motive to ſuch a limitation? The juſtice of God could not require it; for he might, with the ſafety of this attribute, equally have pardon'd the ſins of all men, as the ſins of any one man. Much leſs could his goodneſs require it; this being the great motive, ſo much celebrated in the ſcriptures, upon which he was induc'd to give his only begotten Son to die for us. And the more extenſive the effects of his death were, they ſtill tended the more to illuſtrate the glory of an attribute, which God, in his reveal'd will, ſo much delights to honour. Neither did the divine wiſdom, ſo far as we can diſcover any thing concerning the meaſures of it, require that God ſhould limit the benefits of *Chriſt*'s death. For tho' Princes ſometimes find it neceſſary to make certain exceptions to their publick acts of grace; yet where their own, and the common ſafety will admit, the more general and comprehenſive ſuch acts are, the more they tend to advance both the Prince's honour and ſervice, by recommending him to the greater love and eſteem of his people. But the reaſons of wiſdom, with reſpect to the government of an Almighty and abſolute power,

are very different from thoſe of a precarious, limited, and dependent power; and therefore, tho' God can never be induc'd to do any thing contrary to what he is inclin'd to do, through a defect of power; yet the greateſt and the beſt of Princes are ſometimes, upon that conſideration, oblig'd in prudence to take meaſures repugnant to their moſt ſtrong and natural inclinations to acts of clemency.

Neither could the holineſs of God require him to limit the benefits of *Chriſt's* death, it being, in the deſign and proper influence of it, a moſt powerful motive to holineſs, and every where repreſented as ſuch in the holy ſcriptures.

Now if neither the juſtice or goodneſs, the wiſdom or holineſs of God requir'd, that he ſhould limit the benefits of *Chriſt's* death to a particular number of perſons; but rather requir'd, if we may judge by the light afforded us, from our conſulting theſe attributes, that he ſhould not limit them; we have rational grounds to hope, were the ſcriptures ſilent as to this queſtion, that he has not limited them; there being no other of his attributes, which we can ſuppoſe ſhould be concern'd in the limitation of them. And as to his arbitrary decrees, whereby ſome perſons have thought they might be limited, without any regard to his juſtice, his goodneſs, his wiſdom, or holineſs, as we ſuppoſe a God who poſſeſſes theſe attributes in the higheſt perfection, incapable of acting by ſuch arbitrary decrees, the doctrine founded upon them, muſt neceſſarily ſtand upon the ſame precarious, or rather falſe foundation with them.

2. But the authority of ſcripture is clear, as to this point, wherein it is ſaid, that *God would have all men to be ſav'd*; that *Chriſt dy'd for all*; even for thoſe *that periſh*; and that we may be the occaſion of their periſhing, *for whom Chriſt dy'd*. If theſe ſcriptures do not import the univerſality of *Chriſt's* death, with reſpect to the benefits of it, the ſcriptures can no longer be a rule of faith, nor any doctrine be eſtabliſh'd from the moſt plain terms, or the cleareſt manner of expreſſion in them. And tho' we grant there are other texts of ſcripture which ſpeak of *Chriſt* as dying only *for many*, as giving *his life a ranſom for many*, and *ſhedding his blood for many*, *for the remiſſion of ſins*; yet we ſay, that it is more proper to underſtand many, as including all, than to underſtand all, as excluding any. This, were we not otherways capable of anſwering what is objected, might be ſufficient; but there is ſtill another very reaſonable ſolution, towards reconciling the words *many* and *all*, as oppos'd to one another. When we ſay, *Chriſt dy'd for all*, we ſpeak of the proper deſign and intention of his death; when we ſay, *he gave his life a ranſom for many*,

we ſpeak in regard to the ſpecial and proper effects conſequent to his death.

VI. WHAT were the effects of *Chriſt*'s death, as having a more immediate relation to his own perſon?

DEATH conſiſts in diſſolving the organical conſtruction of the body, and putting a period to thoſe laws of communication, in virtue of which the ſoul and body of a man acted, or at leaſt appear'd to act reciprocally upon one another. I ſhall add nothing to what has been already ſaid concerning the verity of *Chriſt*'s death; in either of theſe reſpects, conſidering him merely, or ſeparately as man; but becauſe the divine and human nature were perſonally united in him, there ariſe two queſtions, when we conſider him in the ſtate of the dead, peculiarly relating to him, which it may not be improper for me to ſay ſomething towards the reſolution of.

1. WHETHER the union of the two natures in *Chriſt* was diſſolv'd by his death?

2. WHETHER, during the ſeparation of his body and human ſoul, the divine nature was ſtill united, in any peculiar manner, to his body.

1. THE neceſſity of aſſerting, that the two natures of *Chriſt* did ſtill continue united after his death, appears from hence; that *Chriſt*, the ſame *Chriſt*, could not then have been ſaid to remain in the ſtate of the dead; but only *Chriſt* with reſpect to his human nature. Whereas it is affirm'd both in the holy ſcriptures, and in the creed, concerning the ſame individual perſon, that he was crucify'd, dead, and bury'd. And yet, on ſuppoſition that after his death the two natures were ſeparated, he would not have been the ſame perſon, but two different perſons; not one *Chriſt*, but two *Chriſts*. And ſo his character of a mediator between God and man, the character, founded in his being God and man in one perſon, would, for the ſpace at leaſt of his lying in the grave, have been of no efficacy or conſideration. It may be farther argued againſt this notion; that when the divine and human nature were afterwards united, *Chriſt* had not re-aſſum'd human nature, but a human perſon. And ſo there would have been a confuſion of two proper and diſtinct perſons in one perſon; to avoid the inconvenience of ſuppoſing which, the fathers and ſchoolmen have agreed in aſſerting, that the Son of God did not originally take upon him a particular human perſon, which ever had any ſeparate or diſtinct ſubſiſtence, but only that he aſſum'd human nature; or, as it is expreſs'd in the Athanaſian creed, *took the manhood into God*.

2. THE great difficulty lies concerning the next queſtion; whether, during the ſeparation of *Chriſt's* body, and his human ſoul, the divine nature was ſtill united, in any peculiar manner, to his body? For as to ſuch a general union of the divine nature with the creatures, as continually ſupports and conſerves them in being, there is nothing, in this reſpect, more peculiar to the ſecond, than to the firſt perſon of the deity. And as to the relation, which the ſecond perſon had to the dead body of *Chriſt*, as having once aſſum'd it in conjunction with a human ſoul, this is no more an argument, upon which to found any ſpecial union between his dead body, and his divine nature, than between his dead body, and his human ſoul; the union between which was confeſſedly diſſolv'd.

WHEREIN then could this union of the divine nature with his body, while he was in the ſtate of the dead, properly conſiſt? They who contend it could not be diſſolv'd, do not tell us this; but ſatisfy themſelves with producing certain reaſons, why it could not be diſſolv'd; in particular, becauſe the perſon who was bury'd, and roſe again, could not have been the ſame perſon who had been dead. But this argument [*], tho' urg'd by ſome of the fathers, does not appear altogether concluſive; it being wholly founded upon a popular, and leſs ſtrict way of ſpeaking; as appears at large from the words of the father referr'd to in the margin, and another paſſage, much to the ſame effect [†], cited by the great ſchoolman. But it might, with equal reaſon, be inferr'd, that we ought not to ſay *Peter* is dead, becauſe the body and ſoul of *Peter* are really ſeparated by death. Yet no one objects againſt this manner of expreſſion (tho' equivocal) as impertinent, becauſe every one underſtands well enough what it is intended to ſignify. Now the reaſon why we affirm the body and ſoul of *Peter* to be ſeparated, is, that there is no farther communication between them, that the ſoul does no longer inform or act upon the body, nor the body occaſion certain ſenſations in the ſoul. But can it be ſaid by thoſe, againſt whom I argue, that the divinity of *Chriſt*, while his body lay in the grave, had any vital communication with it;

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[*] Yet it is inſiſted on by Biſhop *Pearſon*, p. 213. and, to confirm his own opinion, he cites the following paſſage from St. *Auguſtin*. *Credimus certè non in ſolum Deum Patrem, ſed & in Jeſum Chriſtum Filium ejus unicum Dominum noſtrum. Modò totum dixi*, in Jeſum Chriſtum Filium ejus unicum Dominum noſtrum. *Totum ibi intellige, & verbum, & animam, & carnem. Sed utique confiteris etiam illud, quod habet eadem fides, in eum Chriſtum te credere qui crucifixus eſt & ſepultus. Ergo etiam ſepultum Chriſtum eſſe non negas, & tamen ſola caro ſepulta eſt. Si enim erat ibi anima, non erat mortuus. Si autem vera mors erat, & ejus vera ſit reſurrectio, ſine animâ fuerat in ſepulchro, & tamen ſepultus eſt Chriſtus. Ergo Chriſtus erat etiam ſine animâ caro, quia non eſt ſepulta niſi caro.* In Joh. tract. 48.

[†] *Sicut ante mortem caro Chriſti unita fuit ſecundùm perſonam & hypoſtaſin verbo Dei. Ita & remanſit unita poſt mortem. Ut ſcilicet non eſſet alia hypoſtaſis verbi Dei, & carnis Chriſti poſt mortem.* Damaſc. Orth. Fid. lib. 3. c. 17.

upon which a union, like that between a living ſoul and body, or indeed any other proper union, could be founded? To which may be added, that ſuppoſing the divinity united after a ſpecial indiſſoluble manner to the fleſh of *Chriſt*, it muſt have been united after a manner more powerful, with reſpect to all the functions of life, than that whereby a human ſoul is united to a human body. And if it be the union of the ſoul that prevents the death of the body, much more would the death of it be prevented by any ſpecial union of the divine nature. Except we were to ſuppoſe ſuch a union of it, as has no manner of effect or operation; which, as to all the purpoſes of maintaining the perſonality of *Chriſt*, during the ſpace between his death and his reſurrection, appears to be a union of no conſequence.

Chap. IV.

Suffered under Pontius Pilate, *was crucify'd, dead, and buried.*

After the death of *Chriſt*, who condeſcended *in all things, ſin only excepted, to be made like unto his brethren*, his body, according to the uſual manner of other dead bodies, was depoſited in the grave. There being no difficulty in conceiving what it is for a dead body to be bury'd, and we having all the evidence of *Chriſt*'s ſepulture, that any matter of fact is capable of, I ſhall only, towards our explication of this head, enquire for what particular reaſons we here profeſs to believe, that *Chriſt* was bury'd.

1. We profeſs in the creed to believe, that *Chriſt* was bury'd, as his burial gave the ſtronger confirmation, at once, concerning the truth of his death, and of his having aſſum'd a true, proper, and ſubſtantial body. For a body, which was not truly dead as ſuch, could not be bury'd as ſuch.

2. The burial of *Chriſt* gave confirmation to the prophecies concerning it, and even in reference to two conſiderable circumſtances of it. It was prophetically ſpoken of him by *Iſaiah*, that *he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich, in his death* *. The former part of what is here foretold, has been interpreted to

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* *Iſaiah* 53. 9.

receive its accompliſhment on occaſion of that guard of ſoldiers, who were charg'd by *Pilate* with keeping the body of our Saviour after it was bury'd. For tho ſuch an interpretation cannot be juſtify'd from the nature of the military profeſſion, which is in itſelf honourable; yet it may be juſtify'd upon a reaſonable ſuppoſition, that the ſoldiers, or any of them, who, after his interment, had the charge of his body, were the perſons by whom he was ſo groſſly revil'd and inſulted before his death. The latter part of the prediction, that he ſhould make *his grave with the rich in his death*, was accompliſh'd by means of the care which was taken of his burial by *Joſeph* of *Arimathea* *, a *rich man*, *an honourable counſellor*; and by *Nicodemus* †, ſtill ſuperior to him, a *ruler of the Jews*, *a maſter of Iſrael*, a member of the great council of the Sanhedrim. The former went boldly to *Pilate*, and beſought him, that he might take away the body of *Jeſus*. *Pilate* granted his requeſt, and *there being in the place where Jeſus was crucify'd, a garden; and in the garden a new ſepulchre, wherein never man was laid, which Joſeph had hewn out of the rock for his own tomb. There laid they Jeſus, and roll'd a great ſtone to the door of the ſepulchre.* *Nicodemus*, on his part, came, and *brought*, by way of preparation for his interment, *a mixture of myrrhe and aloes, about an hundred pound weight*; to ſay nothing of the care taken by the women to inter him after the moſt reſpectful and honorary manner. This explication appears much more reaſonable, than what ſome learned men have given; in particular, *Calvin*; which yet Biſhop *Pearſon* ſeems to favour ‡, that we are to underſtand the word *grave*, as metaphorically ſignifying *Chriſt*'s death. So that when it is ſaid, *he made his grave with the wicked*, it is principally intended that he was crucify'd between two malefactors. As when it is ſaid, *he made his grave with the rich, in his death*; by the rich, which is, according to the original, in the ſingular number, they underſtand *Pontius Pilate*, the governor, by whom he was condemn'd to death. And they obſerve, that the ſame word which here ſignifies *rich*, is by *Solomon*, in his book of *Eccleſiaſtes* **, expreſſly render'd governor. Tho' the time *Jonah* was in the belly of the whale, cannot properly be call'd a prediction of our Saviour's lying for the ſame ſpace of time in the grave; yet as it prefigur'd his burial, as it was deſign'd by the Spirit of God to do ſo, and is accordingly apply'd in the New Teſtament to that end, it did as effectually ſuppoſe and require, that he ſhould be bury'd, as any prediction of his burial in expreſs terms.

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* *Mat.* 27. 57. † *John* 3. 10. ‡ P. 222.

** Ch. 10. 20.

3. IT is neceſſary we ſhould, in particular, profeſs our belief of *Chriſt's* burial, as it affords us a ſtronger proof of his reſurrection. His being depoſited in the grave, is an argument, that he was dead, in the opinion of thoſe who buried him; and his lying three days in the grave, that he was really dead. Both which facts might have been queſtion'd, if either he had not been buried, or had roſe out of his grave immediately after his burial; and conſequently we could not then have had, in the proper ſenſe of it, that full evidence, which we now have, of his reſurrection.

Of the CREED.

ARTICLE V.

He deſcended into hell; the third day he roſe again from the dead.

CHAP. I.

He deſcended into hell.

THE former part of this article relating to the deſcent of *Chriſt* into hell, was not recited by any writer before *Ruffin*, who found it in the ſymbol of his church at *Aquileia*. But as there was no word in that ſymbol, which denoted the burial of *Chriſt*; ſo theſe words might be interpreted only to ſignify, and accordingly *Ruffin* underſtood them, that *Chriſt* was bury'd. But ſince they were afterwards inſerted in the *Roman* creed, as we now receive it, and in contradiſtinction to the burial of *Chriſt*, they muſt neceſſarily import ſome different object of our belief from that of his burial. Yet what the true ground was, upon which they were originally receiv'd by the church, and what the true and determinate ſenſe of them is at preſent, admits of ſome diſpute. The ſenſe of our own church about them is ſtill controverted. They were once, indeed, expreſſly interpreted [*] to ſignify the ſame with that famous paſſage of St. *Peter* [†], where he ſpeaks of the ſoul of *Chriſt*, as *preaching to the ſpirits which were in priſon* [‡]. According to this explication, the ſenſe of the article was not only determin'd, but the ſenſe of that difficult text in St. *Peter*, in reference to which, the former determination was grounded. Yet it was afterwards thought requiſite to leave out an explication, ſupported only by a controverted text, and which there is ſome difficulty in determining the true ſenſe of. It is evident, nevertheleſs, that this expoſition of the article is not oppos'd by the church; becauſe, in the verſion of the pſalms, which ſhe allows to be ſung in her publick aſſemblies, this ſenſe is ſtill expreſs'd and retain'd [**]. But it is one thing for the church to require our belief of any point, as a condition of communicating with her, or as a ſettled article of faith, and another thing to allow the profeſſion of what may be of ſome uſe to help our devotions, provided there be nothing in it that appears contrary to ſound doctrine.

By this moderation of the church, we are left more at liberty, without being wanting in the regard which we owe to her deciſions, to examine the ſeveral ſenſes, according to which the words may be explain'd; and whether this, which is only allow'd by the church as a pious, but not impos'd as the determinative ſenſe, be not, after all, the true and proper ſenſe. And,

1. Tho' the original words, both in the *Greek* and *Latin* church, may be thought to import no more than the burial of *Chriſt*, or the deſcent of his body into the grave; yet they being now added, as ſuppoſing a diſtinct object of our belief, and not as an explication of what we immediately before profeſs'd to believe concerning *Chriſt*'s burial, (which, in a ſummary of faith, would not only have been an improper repetition, but an expreſſion much more obſcure and perplex'd, than that which it is deſign'd to il-

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[*] In the fourth year of *Edward* the ſixth.

[†] 1 *Pet.* 3. 19.

[‡] *Nam corpus uſque ad reſurrectionem in ſepulchro jacuit; ſpiritus ab illo emiſſus cum ſpiritibus qui in carcere, ſive in inferno detinebantur fuit; illiſque prædicavit; ut teſtatur Petri locus, &c.* Art. Ann. 1552. *Which place was alſo*, as Biſhop *Pearſon* farther obſerves, *made uſe of in the expoſition of the creed, contain'd in the catechiſm ſet forth by the authority of King* Edward, *in the ſeventh year of his reign.*

[**] *Vid.* the creed ſet forth in metre, at the end of the pſalms allowed to be ſung in churches.

luſtrate) for this reaſon, we cannot but think there is a neceſſity that we ſhould ſeek for ſome other ſenſe of the article.

Others have thought, we are to explain our Saviour's deſcent into hell only in a figurative ſenſe, as denoting his ſufferings upon the croſs, the infernal pains due to ſinners. But this interpretation cannot be admitted for ſeveral reaſons. Firſt, becauſe his ſufferings on the croſs neceſſarily preceded his death and burial, and ought therefore, in order of our confeſſion, to have been mention'd before, and not after his death and burial. Secondly, becauſe figurative expreſſions ſhould be particularly avoided in a plain declaration of our faith, and where all the other expreſſions are literally to be underſtood. Thirdly, becauſe this interpretation is grounded on a falſe notion; our Saviour could not ſuffer the pains of the damn'd, the pains more peculiar to them, ariſing from deſpair and remorſe of conſcience; and therefore did not ſuffer them.

Some have ſaid, that, by our Saviour's deſcent into hell, we are to underſtand the deſcent of his ſoul into the place of the dead; yet not ſtrictly, by way of a local motion, but virtually, by making an extraordinary manifeſtation concerning the truth and effects of his death to ſome perſons, who were to receive the benefits of it, as well as to others, who, by their ſins and impenitence, had excluded themſelves from all capacity of being ſav'd by it. For what could be more agreable to the goodneſs of God, than (after the great work of our redemption was finiſh'd) that thoſe, to whom the benefits of it were to extend, ſhould have what was done in their favour, in ſome particular manner, communicated to them; or to his juſtice, that others ſhould know the miſerable ſtate they had brought themſelves into, and that now *nothing remain'd for them, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment.* But, beſides that this expoſition is too ſubtle and figurative, and ſhould not, for that reaſon, be here admitted; the prophecy concerning *Chriſt*, that God *would not leave his ſoul in hell*, according to the ſenſe of which, this part of the creed ought to be explain'd, as being founded principally upon it, cannot be underſtood of a mere virtual deſcent of *Chriſt* into hell (for in that reſpect he may ſtill, and ever be ſaid to deſcend into hell) and muſt therefore be underſtood, of his ſoul's local deſcent into it.

If we underſtand the deſcent of *Chriſt* into hell, not in reſpect to his ſoul, but his body, it ſeems not to be an improbable interpretation of the words, in order to account for the reaſons of making his burial, and his deſcent into hell, diſtinct articles; that his deſcent into hell, is only intended to denote the particular manner of his burial; or to ſhew, that he was not interr'd after the cuſtom of the *Romans*, in having his body conſum'd, or reduc'd to aſhes by fire; for in that ſenſe the prophecy could not be fulfill'd, that he *ſhould not ſee corruption*; but his body was put whole and entire into the grave, to be rais'd to life again in the ſame form, wherein it was there depoſited. A reaſonable account at leaſt is hereby given of the addition made in the article; which, tho' it ſhould be interpreted as referring to his burial, yet implies no unneceſſary or impertinent repetition; but rather tends to ſhew more diſtinctly the accompliſhment of a remarkable prophecy concerning *Chriſt*, and to diſcover, at the ſame time, an over-ruling providence of God, towards the accompliſhment of it; in preſerving to the Jews their common rites of ſepulture, tho' they were at that time under the government of the *Romans*.

THE interpretation, if I miſtake not, now moſt commonly receiv'd, is, that while our Saviour's body lay in the grave, his ſoul went into the place or habitation, wherever that may be, of departed ſpirits, and there continued till it was re-united to his body. According to which ſenſe, the prophecy, *thou ſhalt not leave my ſoul in hell*, is thus explain'd; tho' my ſoul, during the ſpace that my body will lie in the grave, is to go into the regions of the dead, or the proper place of ſeparated ſpirits; yet it ſhall not, with other ſpirits, be detain'd there; but will, in the ſpace of three days, return again, to be united to my body, and afterwards aſcend into heaven with it. This interpretation is thought the more reaſonable, as the *Greeks* by *hades*, which we render hell, commonly underſtood, not the grave, or a ſtate of death, but the place appointed (tho' they differ'd much as to the ſituation of it) for the reception of ſeparate ſpirits, after death.

YET it may not be improper to examine a little, whether the determinate ſenſe in the article, as it was explain'd in the time of *Edward* the ſixth, was not, after all, the true ſenſe.

I ſhall therefore firſt enquire, what foundation that ſenſe may have, either in ſcripture, or the reaſon of the thing; and, ſecondly, what are the moſt material objections, that appear to lie againſt it.

I. WHAT foundation this ſenſe, I mean, as ſupported by the authority of St. *Peter*, in the paſſage referr'd to, may have in other parts of ſcripture. Now, it is argu'd, that the words, as cited and apply'd from that apoſtle, are very agreeable to the deſign of two paſſages in the prophets, and to the moſt natural conſtruction of them. One great end of *Chriſt*'s preaching, as expreſs'd by the prophet *Iſaiah*, was *to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to open the priſon doors to them that were bound*. This could not be underſtood of any temporal deliverance of men, and muſt therefore refer to ſome ſpiritual effects of *Chriſt*'s preaching to them. To the ſame effect the prophet *Zachary* declares, that, *by the blood of the covenant, the priſoners ſhall be ſent forth out of the pit, wherein there is no water.* Theſe prophecies are thought to agree very well with the words of St. *Peter*, according to the ſenſe wherein this church, as we have obſerv'd, once explain'd them. And, as to the reaſon of the thing, it does not appear at all incongruous, either to the divine wiſdom or goodneſs, that thoſe who had liv'd ſo as to entitle themſelves to a ſhare in *Chriſt*'s death, ſhould have thoſe benefits declar'd and aſcertain'd to them in ſome publick and authentic manner. And what method could, on this ſuppoſition, have been more proper, than for *Chriſt* to go down to make a declaration to that end, by his own appearance among them.

His deſcent was no leſs proper to convince the obdurate and impenitent, concerning the reaſonableneſs of their being left in that miſerable condition, to which they had been juſtly condemn'd. There is nothing in what is here ſuppos'd, that appears to be injurious, either to the wiſdom, the goodneſs, or the juſtice of God.

II. I ſhall now conſider two or three of the moſt material objections againſt this interpretation of the words.

1. It is ſaid, theſe words of St. *Peter* do not ſpeak of the ſtate of mankind in general, whether living or dead, but only concerning thoſe who were diſobedient in the days of *Noah*. This is no objection againſt our Saviour's deſcent into the place appointed for the receptacle of departed ſpirits in general; whether in order to preach to them by way of conviction for their former ſins and impieties, or by way of propoſing, in virtue of his death, certain terms of ſalvation to them. The reaſon why thoſe who were diſobedient in the days of *Noah*, are particularly mention'd, may be; that their diſobedience was puniſh'd after ſo very ſignal and remarkable a manner; it not being unuſual, after the declaration of any fact, to exemplify what is declar'd by ſome ſpecial and extraordinary inſtance relating to it.

There is a paſſage in the epiſtle of St. *Paul* to the *Coloſſians* *, which is interpreted, on the other hand, to ſignify the local deſcent of *Chriſt*'s ſoul into the place of ſeparated ſpirits; and againſt which, we farther aſſert, that objections founded only on probable conjectures, or leſs probable than the interpretation of that paſſage, ought not to lie. It is there ſaid, that *our Saviour, having ſpoil'd principalities and powers, made a ſhew of them openly,*

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* Ch. 2. 11.

triumphing over them. Which interpretation is thought more reaſonable, as this triumph of *Chriſt* is repreſented immediately conſequent to his ſufferings, and as the reward of them. Here it is argued, *Chriſt*, in his own dominions, by his own appearance, made his ſuperior power openly known and confeſs'd to the powers of darkneſs; accompliſhing what was foretold by holy *David*, of his *leading captivity captive.* And tho' what was here foretold might be ſaid, and perhaps in a more eminent ſenſe, to be accompliſh'd at his aſcenſion; yet it may alſo be true, with reſpect to his victorious deſcent into the regions of the dead. That this ſenſe, at leaſt, ought not to be excluded, they infer from the following words. *In that he aſcended, what meaneth it, but that he deſcended firſt into the lower parts of the earth. He that deſcended, is the ſame alſo that aſcended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things* †. So that *Chriſt*, according to this expoſition of the words, did not only make an open ſhew of his conqueſt over the devil and his angels, by his aſcending in a glorious viſible manner into heaven, but alſo by a local triumphant deſcent of his ſoul into hell, the place of thoſe wicked and apoſtate ſpirits.

2. What is farther objected againſt the application here made of the words of St. *Peter*, is taken from an expreſſion there us'd, concerning our Saviour's *being quickned by the ſpirit.* Now his ſoul, by which alone, during the ſeparation of it from the body, he could deſcend into hell, being, in its own nature, immortal, he could not, with reſpect to it, be ſaid, in his deſcent, to be quickned by the ſpirit. The force of the argument lies here, that what is already alive, cannot, in a proper ſenſe, be quickned. In regard to life, generally conſider'd, we grant it; but there is no impropriety in ſaying, that it may, notwithſtanding, have the powers of life, by ſome ſpecial action of the divine Spirit upon it, ſtill invigorated to a higher degree of activity and perfection. Who doubts, but that the human nature of *Chriſt*, in conſequence of its union with the divine, was more powerful and lively in its operations; or that even the faithful may here properly be ſaid to be quickned and ſtrengthned *in the inward man*, or human ſoul, *by the Spirit of God dwelling in them.* This objection, therefore, as lying, by neceſſary inference, againſt what we acknowledg'd to be true in other caſes, can be of no force or ſignificancy.

3. The moſt material difficulty is objected by a moſt excellent and learned expoſitor of the creed *; who obſerves, that "as the "patriarchs, prophets, and all the ſaints departed, were never "diſobedient in the days of *Noah*, neither could they need the

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† *Epheſ.* 4. 9, 10.

* Biſhop *Pearſon.*

" publication of the goſpel after the death of *Chriſt*, who, by " virtue of that death, were accepted in him while they liv'd, " and, by that acceptation, had receiv'd a reward long before.

But it does not follow, that becauſe the faithful, by virtue of the death of *Chriſt*, were accepted of him while they liv'd; that conſidering the diſtance of time wherein they liv'd before his appearance; that they ſaw him only afar off in types, and figures, and predictions; none of which were wholly free, before their accompliſhment, from all obſcurity; that therefore *Chriſt* might not out of his great goodneſs, and towards confirming their faith in him more fully, in a ſolemn, and publick manner, declare that acceptation, by a local deſcent of his ſoul among them. As to their receiving a reward long before, ſince it cannot be underſtood of their full and final reward, when the ſouls ſhall be united to their bodies, and in conſequence of that re-union; why might not *Chriſt* think fit, for the ſame reaſons of goodneſs, by his perſonal appearance among them, to animate their hopes, and aſſure their expectations of it the more, in God's due and appointed time?

The words of St. *Peter*, tho' confeſs'd by *Bellarmine* himſelf to be very obſcure, yet certainly have a leſs force put upon them by this interpretation; than by thoſe, who would interpret them only to ſignify, that *Jeſus Chriſt*, after he was return'd to life again, by the Spirit of God, which he alſo communicated (with the ſame deſign) to his apoſtles, preach'd the goſpel to the Gentiles, the ſpirits in priſon, or ſhut up in idolatry, as in a priſon. Suppoſing this ſenſe ſhould poſſibly prove true, we muſt, however, allow it to be much more harſh, ſtrain'd, and foreign, as to the natural conſtruction of the words, than the former ſenſe; which having nothing in it contrary to ſound doctrine, but being ſtill allow'd, and incorporated in our publick devotions, as a pious interpretation of the words, I cannot (without being too poſitive in ſo nice a point) but think it preferable to the former ſenſe; and, indeed, certainly true, if there be a neceſſity of explaining the words in either ſenſe.

We profeſs to believe, according to this interpretation, that *Chriſt*, by his ſpirit deſcended into the place of ſeperate ſpirits; whether denoting the receptacle of evil or good ſpirits; that he might, by a ſenſible demonſtration of his power, convince the former of their impiety, and the juſtneſs of their ſufferings; and ſtrengthen the faith of the latter, by declaring the benefits and merits of his death, in a more expreſs and particular manner to them; or if there were perſons in any middle ſtate between theſe two, to propoſe, in virtue of his death, certain conditions of grace and pardon to them.

Chap. II.

He deſcended into hell; the third day he roſe again from the dead.

THE reaſon of inſerting this article, concerning the reſurrection of *Chriſt*, in the creed, is very obvious; there being no doctrine in ſcripture, upon which greater ſtreſs is laid, towards proving him to be *Chriſt*, the *Meſſiah*, the Son of God. In order therefore to eſtabliſh ſo eſſential an article of the chriſtian faith, and upon which the proofs of Chriſtianity in general, have, according to the ſenſe of the holy ſcriptures, ſo immediate and viſible a dependence,

I. I ſhall enquire, why it was neceſſary that our Saviour ſhould riſe from the dead.

II. Shew, that we have clear and inconteſtable evidence, that he did riſe from the dead.

III. Consider the circumſtance here mention'd, with reſpect to the time of his riſing from the dead.

IV. Examine one of the moſt ſpecious objections againſt the truth of this reſurrection, from his diſcovering that he was riſen only to his friends and diſciples, and not openly to the Jews.

V. Enquire, why ſuch peculiar ſtreſs is laid, for the proof of the chriſtian religion in general, upon this article.

I. Why it was neceſſary that our Saviour ſhould riſe from the dead. Now, in anſwer to this enquiry, ſeveral reaſons may be aſſign'd. Our Saviour roſe from the dead, that he might more fully aſcertain to us the merit of his death, towards the end he propos'd in ſuffering it. Had death continued, beyond the time prefix'd by himſelf, to have *dominion over him in the grave*, the grounds of believing that he had overcome death, and open'd to others the gate of everlaſting life, had been entirely ſubverted. The Jews might then, with great appearance of reaſon, have ſaid; *He ſav'd others, himſelf he cannot ſave. If he be the Son of God*, let him riſe from the dead, or come out of the grave, *and we will believe him*. Or *David* might very well have put the queſtion prophetically in his name; *What profit is there in my blood, when I go down into the pit? Shall the duſt praiſe thee, ſhall it declare thy truth?* That is, if after my death, I ſhall ſtill be detain'd in the grave, where will the effects of my ſufferings or death appear? Or how ſhall the world be convinc'd of this important truth, that I have deliver'd others from the power of death, who am not able to deliver my ſelf? Tho' our redemption therefore is attributed, in a more eſpecial manner, to the death of *Chriſt*; yet, to aſſure us that he had overcome death, and that the price of our redemption from it was fully paid, it is declar'd, that *he roſe again for our juſtification*; or in order to convince us by a ſenſible evidence, that we are in fact juſtify'd through the merits of his death. On occaſion of which evidence, and to ſhew the neceſſity there was why it ſhould be produc'd, we are told by the apoſtle; *it is Chriſt that dy'd; yea* rather *that is riſen again*. And in another place; *if Chriſt be not riſen, then is our faith*, in the merits of his death *vain; we are yet in our ſins*.

2. The reſurrection of *Chriſt* was neceſſary, at once to confirm the ancient prophecies concerning it, and to ſhew that he was a true prophet himſelf. In the ſecond pſalm, both his injurious treatment here upon earth, previous to his death, and his reſurrection after it, are deſcrib'd. In the former reſpect, it is ſaid, *the kings of the earth ſet themſelves together, and take counſel againſt the Lord, and againſt his anointed*. In the latter, God declares; *yet I have ſet mine anointed upon my holy hill of Sion. I will declare the decree the Lord hath ſaid unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*. And tho' it may be naturally inferr'd from theſe words, and argued from a proper application of them, that as *David*, after his ſufferings and perſecutions, ſhould at length be eſtabliſh'd in his kingdom; ſo *Chriſt*, after his death, ſhould by a ſpecial and immediate power of God, be reſtor'd again to life; yet as the action of God to that end, is here only expreſs'd by the metaphorical term *begotten*; upon which account the true ſenſe of the prophecy may be more difficultly aſcertain'd; therefore holy *David* ſpeaks more expreſſly in another place concerning his reſurrection, and after a manner, which ſerves to explain, how this text ought to be underſtood and apply'd; *My fleſh*, ſays he, *ſhall reſt in hope; for thou wilt not leave my ſoul in hell, neither wilt thou ſuffer thy holy one to ſee corruption*. And accordingly St. *Peter* directly applies this prophecy, as referring to our Lord's reſurrection *, and ſhews, in a way ſtrictly argumentative, that theſe words could not, in a literal ſenſe, be ſpoken of *David*, but were more eſpecially to be explain'd as having relation to *Chriſt*. *As for the patriarch David, he is both dead and bury'd; therefore being a prophet*, &c. *Spake of the reſurrection of Chriſt, that his ſoul was not left in hell; neither his fleſh did ſee corruption* †.

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* *Acts* 2. 25, 26.

† ℣. 29, 30, 31.

HE foretold his own reſurrection, not only in expreſs terms to his diſciples [*], but in terms, that were ſufficiently plain and intelligible to the Jews, in the deſign, and moſt obvious conſtruction of them. *Deſtroy this temple, and in three days I will raiſe it up.* So that, to ſay nothing concerning the types, whereby his reſurrection from the dead was prefigur'd, it was neceſſary he ſhould have been, in ſome convenient time, reſtor'd again to life, whether we conſider him in his own perſon, as a prophet, or as the *Meſſiah,* long before prophetically ſpoken of by other perſons.

3. THE reſurrection of *Chriſt* gives us the greater aſſurance, in God's appointed time, of our own reſurrection; firſt, as hereby he gave a general confirmation to the truth of all thoſe doctrines, and to every one of them, wherein he had before inſtructed his diſciples and followers: Among the reſt, he had particularly declar'd, that *the dead ſhould be raiſ'd to life again*; that *all who are in their graves ſhall hear the voice of the Son of man, and ſhall come forth; they that have done good, to the reſurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the reſurrection of damnation.* Secondly, as hereby he ſhew'd, by a ſenſible demonſtration in his own perſon, the poſſibility of the thing. If human reaſon, when we aſſert the doctrine of a reſurrection from the dead, ſhould now queſtion; *who hath believ'd our report; or to whom hath the arm of the Lord been reveal'd?* We have, in the example of *Chriſt,* a ready, clear, and inconteſtable anſwer; who is therefore call'd *the firſt-fruits of them that ſlept* [†]; *the firſt-begotten from the dead* [‡]; in alluſion to that prophecy concerning him, *thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee*; and of whom it is farther ſaid, *that he ſhould be the firſt who was to riſe from the dead* [**]. The truth of our own reſurrection then, is, on either account, aſſur'd; whether we conſider the reſurrection of *Chriſt,* as an exemplary inſtance of what the power of God may, and can do; or as an evidential proof of what God has declar'd and promis'd in the holy ſcriptures, that he will do. For which reaſon, we are ſaid to be *begotten again to a lively hope, through the reſurrection of Jeſus* [††]; and to *believe in God, who raiſ'd him from the dead; that our faith and hope,* as to all the articles of the chriſtian faith, and particularly as to this of the reſurrection, *may be in God* [‡‡]. We have now a certain expectation, that *he who raiſ'd up Chriſt from the dead, ſhall alſo quicken our mortal bodies* [*]. And therefore it is a juſt and unanſwerable argument, which the apoſtle puts

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[*] *Matt.* 16. 21.—20. 19.

[†] 1 *Cor.* 15. 20.

[‡] *Rev.* 1. 5.

[**] *Acts* 26. 22, 23.

[††] 1 *Pet.* 1. 3.

[‡‡] ℣. 21.

[*] *Rom.* 8. 11.

by way of interrogation. *If Chriſt then be preach'd, that he is riſen from the dead; how ſay ſome among you, that there is no reſurrection of the dead?*

FOR theſe ſeveral reaſons, and others which might be mention'd, it was neceſſary that *Chriſt* ſhould riſe from the dead. I ſhall ſhew in the next place,

II. WE have full and undeniable evidence to prove, that he did riſe from the dead. This will appear, if we conſider the ſeveral witneſſes, or what ſort of people they were, whereby his reſurrection was atteſted. This being a fact which gave ſo full and clear a confirmation to the doctrine of *Chriſt*, which is ſo often appeal'd to in ſcripture, in proof of his being the *Chriſt*; it was neceſſary to have it well aſcertain'd, both with regard to the number, and the credibility of the witneſſes. In the former reſpect, we have perſons of both ſexes atteſting the truth of it; when *Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, came with ſweet ſpices to anoint him*; they found the ſtone roll'd from the door of the ſepulchre, and not *Jeſus* lying, but an angel, in the form of a young man, ſitting in it; who declar'd to them, that *Jeſus* was riſen, ſhew'd them the place where he had lain, and adds a farther circumſtance to ſhew, that he was, in truth, riſen, by charging them to tell his diſciples, that he would *go before them into Galilee, and there they ſhould ſee him.* The apoſtles afterwards convers'd frequently with him; he demonſtrated the verity of his reſurrection with a true and real body, by ſtanding in the midſt of them; by ſhewing them his hands and his ſides; by breathing on them; and by eating and drinking with them. He went and commun'd after a familiar manner with them, and ſhew'd them, in particular, the reaſons of his reſurrection *. He expounded the ſcriptures concerning himſelf, and this very article, to them. He appear'd to eleven of them as they ſat at meat †. And, leſt all theſe teſtimonies ſhould not be ſufficient, he was ſeen of five hundred brethren at once ‡.

THIS fact being atteſted by ſo many witneſſes, all the queſtion is, how far their evidence is to be admitted as credible? If they bore a falſe teſtimony, it muſt have been reſolv'd into this; that they were not careful to inform themſelves ſufficiently concerning the fact, or elſe that they deſignedly miſrepreſented it. But there are no juſt or reaſonable grounds to entertain the leaſt ſuſpicion, either of their care in the former, or of their fidelity in the latter reſpect. To ſhew that the apoſtles were far from being too credulous in their enquiries concerning the truth of *Chriſt*'s reſurrection,

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* *Luke* 24. 26. † *Mark* 16. 14. ‡ 1 *Cor.* 15. 6, 7.

ction, we may obſerve, that they believ'd it not, on the teſtimony of *Mary Magdalene*, who had ſeen him. They mourn'd and wept, (which rather argued a diſtruſt of what ſhe reported) when ſhe told them, *he was alive, and had been ſeen of her* *. They gave no more credit to the two diſciples, with whom he had ſo familiar and long a converſation, in their way to *Emmaus*; when thoſe diſciples went, *and told them what had paſs'd, neither believed they them:* One of them, in particular, was ſo incredulous, that he would not believe on any other teſtimony, but that of his own ſenſes; neither would he wholly truſt to his own eyes; but requir'd ſtill farther ſatisfaction, by putting his *finger into the print of the nails*, which faſten'd our Lord's body to the croſs, and *thruſting his hand into his ſide*. Theſe were ſuch precautions, as plainly diſcover the diſciples of *Chriſt* were ſo far from being chargeable with too eaſy a belief of this article, that they were rather culpable, in demanding ſuch proofs of it, as were more than neceſſary, or ſufficient. Our Saviour, by reproving the incredulity of *Thomas* in the following words, intended alſo, that the other apoſtles ſhould ſhare, tho' more remotely, in the reproof; *Thomas, becauſe thou haſt ſeen me, thou haſt believ'd; bleſſed are they that have not ſeen, yet have believ'd* †. For that the reſt of them were rather too incredulous, than forward of belief, as to this fundamental article, notwithſtanding our Lord *had openly ſhew'd himſelf alive after his paſſion, by certain infallible proofs* ‡; the ſevere reprimand which the eleven receiv'd from our Saviour, as they ſat at meat, plainly diſcovers; when *he upbraided them with their unbelief, and hardneſs of heart; becauſe they believ'd not them, which had ſeen him, after he was riſen.*

NEITHER can we ſuppoſe, after the diſciples of *Chriſt* had us'd all this caution not to be impos'd upon in an article, which it ſo much concern'd them to be perfectly ſatisfy'd concerning the truth of, that they would afterwards go about to miſrepreſent it. For what end could they have in making a report contrary to the truth of what had in fact happen'd, when it was ſo eaſy for their enemies to detect the falſhood of it; eſpecially when they appeal'd for the truth of it, to five hundred witneſſes at once? How naturally would the Jews, had there been no good foundation for ſuch an appeal, have put them upon the trial of it? Or how is it likely, that, upon a ſtrict examination, ſo many witneſſes, tho' they had conſpir'd to propagate a lye, ſhould yet perfectly agree together?

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* *Mark* 16. 10. † *John* 20. 29. ‡ *Acts* 1. 5.

It is not uſual with impoſtors to refer to ſo many living witneſſes at once. Two or three may poſſibly, out of ſuch a number, give a conſiſtent, tho' falſe teſtimony; but it is not credible, could they all be ſuborn'd to that end, they would all give the very ſame evidence, and with reſpect to the ſeveral circumſtances of the fact which they atteſted.

Neither could the diſciples of *Chriſt* propoſe any honour or advantage to themſelves, by ſpreading a falſe report concerning his reſurrection. For all honours were then in the diſpoſal of their enemies, the enemies of that very doctrine, for the ſake of which, they were more particularly evil ſpoken of and inſulted. Neither could they, as to this article, by ſpreading a falſhood, propoſe any advantage to themſelves: Inſtead of that, by preaching a doctrine, which they ſo much, and ſo particularly inſiſted upon, to confirm the truth of the chriſtian revelation in general, (and which is, both in its own nature, and the ſenſe of the holy ſcriptures a moſt convincing proof to that end) they took a method, which tended ſo much the more to provoke the malice and cruelty of their enemies. What account then can be given, that the diſciples of *Chriſt*, contrary to all the rules, whereby deſigning men conduct themſelves in all other caſes, ſhould, without any viſible occaſion, without any viſible proſpect here or hereafter, ſo needleſly have expos'd themſelves to the moſt grievous ſufferings and perſecutions in this life, in confirmation of a doctrine, which they knew, or, upon the leaſt examination, might eaſily have known, to be falſe? It is poſſible, that particular perſons, from a motive of vanity, or perhaps out of a miſtaken zeal, may ſuffer much, and even die to confirm a falſe perſuaſion; but it cannot be conceiv'd how, or upon what views, a great number of perſons of both ſexes, in every ſtate and condition of life, ſhould conſpire to ſuffer the greateſt miſeries, for the ſake of reporting a fact, which (if it had not been true) they could ſo readily have diſcover'd the falſhood of. But it is ſtill the more unaccountable, that many of them ſhould be willing to engage in ſuch a deſign upon the proſpect of preſent death; whereby a period would not only be put to all their enjoyments in this life, but, upon their own principles, all their hopes would be terminated in regard to the next life; that very religion, for the truth of which they profeſs'd to die, condemning, under the ſevereſt penalties, all inſincerity, lying, and falſhood, upon any motive whatever.

It can only be ſaid then, that the account, which is given in the holy ſcriptures, and the teſtimonies we produce from them in proof of *Chriſt*'s reſurrection, were inſerted ſeveral years after, in the books, which compoſe the canon of them. But the weakneſs of this pretence appears from what has been obſerv'd before, concerning the impoſſibility of corrupting or adding to the ſcriptures, in any material article; eſpecially as to a matter of fact, which the firſt Chriſtians principally appeal'd to, in proof of *Chriſt's* being the *Meſſiah*, and which it ſo highly concern'd the Jews, had that been poſſible, to diſprove.

IF it ſtill be urg'd by unbelievers, that the witneſſes of *Chriſt's* reſurrection, hitherto produc'd, were his own friends and diſciples, we anſwer: Tho' their teſtimony had been ſufficient, for the reaſons already mention'd, to prove it; yet we do not want the confeſſion even of unbelievers and adverſaries, to render the proof of it ſtill more inconteſtable. For fear of the angel of the Lord, who deſcended from heaven, and rolled back the ſtone from the door of the ſepulchre, the keepers of it were ſurprized in ſuch an extraordinary manner, that they became as dead men *. And ſome of them, upon a ſettled conviction of what they had ſeen, went into the city, and made a report of it, to the Chief Prieſts; who thereupon agreed to corrupt them with money, by that means to ſtifle their true teſtimony, upon a pretence that the diſciples of *Chriſt* came by night, and ſtole the dead body of their maſter away; a ridiculous pretence, on all accounts; and which only ſhews the ſtrong power, and, at the ſame time, the little arts of prejudice; when men are reſolv'd either not to be convinc'd, or not to own their conviction to others. Had the diſciples of *Chriſt* been in a condition to have made ſuch an attempt, as they were not, againſt a *Roman* guard, conſiſting of ſixty men; yet, is it reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that, upon ſo ſtrict a charge as was then given to the ſoldiers, and upon ſo extraordinary an occaſion, there was not one centinel awake, nor awaken'd by the noiſe and diſturbance, which his diſciples, in ſtealing his body away, muſt of neceſſity have made. This is ſo poor, and unſoldier-like an account of a *Roman* guard, as there is no example of in hiſtory; and which cannot, on any tolerable ſuppoſition, be admitted.

III. I am to conſider the circumſtance here mention'd, with reſpect to the time of our Saviour's riſing from the dead; and that was the third day after his interment.

THERE is no difficulty in relation to the time here ſpecify'd, as it is expreſs'd in the creed; tho', if we underſtand the ſpace between our Lord's burial and his reſurrection, as expreſs'd in the holy ſcriptures, the words of them are not altogether ſo eaſily accounted for. Our Saviour ſpeaks prophetically of his reſurrection, that, as *Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; ſo ſhould the ſon of man be three days, and three nights in the heart of the earth.* And yet, during the interval, his body remain'd in the grave, there were only two nights, and one entire day between them. How then could he be ſaid to have lain in the grave either three days, or three nights. In the ſtricteſt ſenſe of the words, we grant, he could not; but in a popular ſenſe, according to the language both of the *Greeks* and *Hebrews*, as part * of the day or night is us'd to denote the whole day or night, a reaſonable account may be given of them. And as it is ſo frequently ſaid in ſcripture, that our Lord roſe again the third day, three days and three nights are to be underſtood according to this manner of expreſſion, and the third day not to be extended to ſignify the whole day, with the night following, except according to an ordinary ſenſe, wherein this way of ſpeaking was at that time underſtood. I proceed,

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* *Matt.* 28. 2, 3.

IV. To examine one of the moſt ſpecious objections againſt the truth of *Chriſt's* reſurrection, from his appearing after he was riſen only to his friends and diſciples, and not openly to the Jews. It is ſaid, if the reſurrection of *Chriſt* was ſo neceſſary to confirm the truth of the chriſtian religion, or the divine miſſion of *Chriſt*, why was it not atteſted after ſuch a manner, as to leave no poſſible room for doubt or ſcruple, concerning the certainty of it? Why did not our Saviour make an open and triumphant entry into *Jeruſalem*, after he was riſen; or, at leaſt, go and ſhew himſelf to the High Prieſts? Theſe, or any other like queſtions, may be eaſily reſolv'd. It is ſufficient to juſtify the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, in this reſpect, that he afforded the Jews, in order to their conviction, that moral evidence, which, had it been attended to, was of a competent force towards convincing all unprejudic'd and well-diſpoſed perſons. God, in the diſpenſations of his grace, is no more oblig'd to afford men all the poſſible means of conviction, than continually to work miracles, or exert his power to the utmoſt extent of it, in the courſe of his providence. Neither is it neceſſary that he ſhould afford all men equal means of conviction, any more than that he ſhould place them, on every account, in equal circumſtances of life. If, in either reſpect, he afford men what is requiſite, and eſpecially, which is the true ſtate of the caſe, more than is abſolutely requiſite to the end propos'd, certainly they can have no reaſon to complain.

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* *Synecdoche ergo quâ pro toto pars ponitur.* Mald. ex Auguſt. *Hic nihil aliud ſignificatur quàm futurum Chriſtum in ſepulchro* τρισὶ νυχθημέροις. *Cui ſenſui implendo, ſufficit eum ſepultum fuiſſe tempore eo, cujus partes ad tria* νυχθήμερα *pertingerent.* Grot. Accordingly Biſhop *Pearſon*, which thoſe, who would enter upon a more critical examination of this point, may conſult, cites ſeveral authorities to prove, that we are to underſtand the words, three days, and three nights, according to a popular way of ſpeaking, both by the *Greeks* and *Hebrews*; and particularly obſerves, in relation to the latter of them, that a night and a day in their language, not us'd to compoſition, is the ſame with the *Greek* νυχθήμερον, or ἡμερονύκτιον.

By the ſame argument, which is here brought to diſprove the reſurrection of *Chriſt*, why did not our Saviour, after he was riſen, openly appear before a full ſenate at *Rome?* Or why does he not now publickly appear in places of the greateſt concourſe, or to every unbeliever, in particular, towards *convincing him of unbelief*, and preventing the farther growth of infidelity in general.

It may be farther reply'd, ſo far as this objection relates to the Jews, that there were particular reaſons, from a conſideration of their obſtinacy and perverſeneſs, why God ſhould not have afforded them thoſe extraordinary means of conviction, which are contended for; in particular, as thoſe means would not, probably, have had the ſuppos'd effect upon them. For why ſhould it be thought neceſſary, that thoſe who were not convinc'd by ſo many ſigns and wonders, which our Saviour had done among them, would have been effectually perſuaded, tho' he had viſibly appear'd to them, after he roſe from the dead? They had therefore at once render'd themſelves more unworthy of ſo ſpecial a favour, and more incapable of benefiting by it. But whether they would have benefited by it or not, the concluſion will hold ſtill good, that neither the wiſdom, nor the goodneſs of God oblig'd him to employ extraordinary methods, where the ordinary were ſufficient, and even to perſons, in a good diſpoſition to be convinc'd, more than ſufficient.

VI. Why ſo great ſtreſs, in proof of the chriſtian religion in general, is laid upon this article? The reaſon of this muſt be, that there was ſome peculiar evidence of a divine power in the reſurrection of *Chriſt*, above what ſo plainly diſcover'd itſelf in his other miracles, and which afforded leſs ſcope to the cavils of prejudic'd, or incredulous men. With regard to this conſideration, the Jews us'd all means, had that been poſſible, to prevent the reſurrection of *Chriſt*; but when they could not do that, their next buſineſs was to hinder the report of it from ſpreading abroad. They pretended, that when he was alive, he wrought his miracles in virtue of the ineffable name of God, which he had found means, when once he went into the temple, to diſcover the ſecret of, and take away with him; which ſome of the Jews have reported was guarded by two lions in the temple of *Solomon*, for above a * thouſand years. But when *Chriſt* was dead, as they could no longer pretend that he was capable of applying this charm, or any other, towards reſtoring himſelf to life again, they had no other refuge, but to deny the truth of his reſurrection; for that being granted, plainly *declar'd him to be the Son of God by a power* truly miraculous and divine, and the effects whereof could not otherways poſſibly be accounted for.

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* *Judæorum nonnulli prodigia Jeſu aſcribunt nomini cuidam arcano; quod à Solomone in templo poſitum, duo leones per mille & amplius annos cuſtodiverunt.* Grot. de ver. rel. chriſt. p. 274. For which that excellent author handſomely expoſes their folly and weakneſs.

The other pretence alſo of the Jews, concerning our Saviour's working miracles by the power of evil ſpirits, was alſo hereby more effectually obviated. For they did not believe, that the devil, whatever powers they attributed to him, had a power of raiſing the dead to life. They knew the key of the grave was only in the hands of God; and therefore, inſtead of the queſtion, *has it ever been known from the beginning of the world, that one who was born blind could receive his ſight?* This queſtion might have been put the ſtronger, in proof of our Saviour's being rais'd by a true divine power; has it ever been known from the beginning of the world, that one who was dead could ever, without ſuch a power, be reſtor'd again to life.

There are other circumſtances that might be obſerv'd, in reſpect to the reſurrection of *Chriſt*, as affording men, in general, the moſt convincing and unexceptionable proof of his being the *Chriſt*; but thoſe I have mention'd are ſufficient to ſhew what I intended, under this particular, why ſo great care was taken, both by our Lord, and his apoſtles, to eſtabliſh the truth of this article; as being, in ſome peculiar manner, and in certain reſpects, ſtill more evidential of his divine miſſion and authority.

Of the CREED.

Article VI.

He aſcended into heaven; and ſitteth on the Right Hand of God, the Father Almighty.

Chap. I.

He aſcended into heaven.

After our Lord had ſufficiently evidenc'd the truth of his reſurrection, by a viſible appearance and converſation upon earth, for the ſpace of forty days, from the time of it, he was tranſlated, in a viſible and glorious manner, to heaven. What it may be proper for us to obſerve, in reference to his aſcenſion, I ſhall endeavour to reduce to the following particulars.

I. The proofs of it, conſider'd as matter of fact.

II. The reaſons of it.

III. The circumſtances which attend it, relating to the ſtate of his human body and ſoul.

IV. The place to which he aſcended. And,

I. Tho' it was not neceſſary that there ſhould have been ſo great a number of witneſſes to atteſt the truth of our Lord's aſcenſion, as that of his reſurrection; that being the great article in diſpute with the enemies of chriſtianity, and principally inſiſted upon by the faithful, in confirmation of it. To which we may add, that his reſurrection being once fully atteſted, it was even reaſonable, in the nature of the thing, to ſuppoſe, that his aſcenſion, as a farther reward of what he had done and ſuffer'd for us, would be, one time or other, conſequent to it. Yet we do not want ſufficient evidence to prove, that, in fact, he did aſcend, from thoſe who were eye-witneſſes to his aſcenſion. For he *being aſſembled together with the apoſtles*; and having declar'd what power they ſhould receive from the Holy Ghoſt, and what they were requir'd to do, by virtue, and in conſequence of it [*]. *While they beheld, he was taken up, and a cloud receiv'd him out of their ſight* [†]. And while they were looking, and caſting their eyes forward upon his aſcending body, to obſerve the gradual motion of it, two angels appear'd, ſtanding by them, in white apparel, and declar'd to them; *this ſame Jeſus, which is taken up from you into heaven, ſhall ſo come in like manner, as ye have ſeen him go into heaven* [‡].

The nature of this fact was ſuch, that, allowing the apoſtles to have been perſons of common underſtanding, they could not have been impos'd upon by any falſe ſhew or appearance of it. And as to their evidence, in reporting it, the ſame reaſons ſubſiſting to induce our belief of their veracity, upon which I obſerv'd they could not be ſuppos'd to falſify, as to the article of the reſurrection. I ſhall not here make an unneceſſary repetition of them; but proceed to conſider,

II. In the next place, the reaſons why our Lord aſcended. Which will appear firſt, both from the prophetical predictions, and as having a near affinity with them, the typical repreſentations of it. The words of the royal prophet are plainly to be referr'd, and are accordingly apply'd by St. *Paul* [**] to this victorious act of our Saviour's power, purſuant to his reſurrection. *Thou haſt aſcended up on high; thou haſt led captivity captive, and receiv'd gifts for men* [††]. It is granted, theſe words may be explain'd concerning *David*'s triumphant aſcent upon the hill where the temple ſtood, after his conqueſt over the *Philiſtines*: But they are only to be explain'd ſo by way of accomodation, and in a ſecondary ſenſe. *Beza* obſerves, that by the confeſſion of the more moderate and unprejudic'd Jews, the application of the words of *David*, according to St. *Paul*, is ſo ſtrictly juſt, that all other applications of them are to be look'd upon as figurative or improper [‡‡]. For the word *on high*, is an ordinary expreſſion of holy *David* for heaven [*]. Beſides that, the latter part plainly refers to the habitation, or reſidence of God; but of the *Lord God*, or *Chriſt*;

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[*] *Acts* 1. 4, 8. [†] ℣. 9. [‡] ℣. 10. 11. [**] *Epheſ.* 4. 8.

[††] *Pſalm* 68. 18.

[‡‡] *Adeò propria eſt hæc Pauli explicatio ut aliæ omnes tranſlatitiæ ſint, fatentibus etiam Judæis æquioribus.*

[*] *Pſalm* 18. 17.—93. 4.—102. 20.—144. 7.

God, as having aſſum'd the human nature into a perſonal union with the divine; there to reign and dwell for ever with the ſaints, who ſhall improve his gifts, the diſtribution whereof, he receiv'd as a reward of his victories, to the ends for which they were diſtributed. According to this ſenſe, if we conſider *Chriſt* as the occaſional cauſe, or means of grace, the trouble which ſome criticks have given themſelves, towards reconciling the words of *David* with thoſe of the apoſtle, might have been avoided; it being indifferent, upon this diſtinction, whether *Chriſt* be ſaid to have *receiv'd gifts for men*, or to have *given gifts to men.*

The aſcenſion of *Chriſt* was alſo typically repreſented under the law. As the tabernacle was underſtood by the Jews to ſignify this world; and the holy of holies, the ſupreme heaven, the ſeat and habitation of God; ſo the High Prieſt paſſing through the reſt of the tabernacle, and entring with the blood of the ſacrifice into the holy of holies, prefigur'd the paſſage of *Chriſt* through the ſeveral ſtages of life in this world; and more eſpecially his tranſlation after his death through the regions of the air, and the ſeveral intermediate heavens, to the heaven of heavens. And accordingly the apoſtle applies this typical repreſentation of our Lord's triumphant entry into heaven, in the following words. *Chriſt being come an High Prieſt of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands; that is to ſay, not of this building, neither by the blood of goats or calves, but by his own blood, he enter'd in once, into the holy place, having obtain'd eternal redemption for us.*

From which words, we may farther take occaſion to obſerve, it was requiſite, in the reaſon of the thing, that our Saviour ſhould aſcend into heaven, that he might more effectually apply the benefits of his ſacrifice to us, and perform another proper and important act of the ſacerdotal office, in making continual interceſſion for us; that ſo we might *come more boldly*, and with full aſſurance of faith, *to the throne of grace* *. The ground or reaſon of which confidence, the apoſtle aſſigns more particularly in a following paſſage of the ſame epiſtle. *For Chriſt is not enter'd into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itſelf, now to appear in the preſence of God for us* †.

Another reaſon of our Lord's aſcending into heaven, was, that hereby he ſtill more effectually diſcover'd the merits of his death, than he could have done by the moſt evident proofs of his reſurrection. For tho' his riſing from the dead gave ſufficient confirmation to the truth of whatever he declar'd, as a prophet; yet we could not have had an aſſurance ſo adapted to the common weakneſs and capacities of men, who are, in general, moſt powerfully affected with ſenſible arguments, or matters of fact, that *Chriſt* had really merited heaven for us, if he had ſtill continued upon earth, without being tranſlated thither himſelf. As his reſurrection from the dead was neceſſary to ſhew that he *had overcome death*; ſo was his aſcenſion to aſcertain us, in a more conſpicuous manner, that he had *open'd to us the gate of everlaſting life*, by his own perſonal entrance into it. To which we may add, that this being the greateſt reward of what he perform'd for us, it gave us, in proportion, a ſtronger evidence as to the efficacy of his performance; and the acceptance of it with the Father, who therefore, in conſideration of it, had ſo highly exalted him.

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* *Heb.* 4. 16. † Ch. 9. 24.

I ſhall not inſiſt upon it, as a reaſon of his aſcending, that he told his apoſtles before-hand whither, and upon what deſign he was going from them *. Becauſe this only imported a conſequential neceſſity of his aſcenſion, particularly in virtue of that promiſe, *I go to prepare a place for you, and will come again, and receive you unto my ſelf; that where I am, there you may be alſo*; and not antecedently, as the reaſons I propos'd to mention, in the nature of the thing. I am to conſider,

III. THE circumſtances which attended our Lord's aſcenſion, relating to the ſtate of his human body and ſoul. Some have explain'd the aſcenſion of *Chriſt* in a ſenſe purely figurative, as if we were to underſtand no more thereby, than that, upon his reſurrection, his body was ſublimated and refin'd to a greater degree of purity, and render'd more active and powerful, as to all the operations proper to a body. But it is evident from his own words, that this ſenſe cannot be admitted, and that his aſcenſion is to be conſider'd as importing his body to have been locally, and in a literal ſenſe, tranſlated from this earth, by a gradual motion into the air, and the upper regions of it. So that it was in a different place from what it was in before, and in one place, not in all places, or more places than one, at the ſame time. For on either of theſe two ſuppoſitions, however his body had been modify'd, of what particles ſoever of celeſtial matter it had been compos'd; yet ſtill it would have loſt the proper and eſſential qualities of body or matter in general, admitting the exiſtence (in reſpect to its pretended ubiquity) of any other body or matter in the world. His words, which I refer to, are thoſe which he ſpake to *Mary*,

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* *John* 14. 28, 29.

touch me not, for I am not yet aſcended to my Father *. This being ſpoken confeſſedly after his reſurrection, it is plain, that he had not yet aſcended; and that his aſcenſion therefore muſt denote ſomething very different from his reſurrection; ſomething, whatever qualities we aſſign to his riſen body, yet incidental to it, with reſpect to a local removal of it, in a proper ſenſe, from earth to heaven.

The body wherewith he aſcended was the ſame numerical body wherein he ſuffer'd, and roſe again, not another body, as the Manicheans, and ſince the Socinians have aſſerted, compos'd of a celeſtial matter, wholly different from the former conſtituent parts of it. For tho' when the ſoul of man is united by a vital communication to any body, ſuch a communication may properly denominate it his body; yet ſuppoſing his ſoul had only ſhifted the ſcene of its reſidence out of one body into another, he could not ſo properly be call'd the ſame man; if *Chriſt* then had not aſcended with the ſame body, to which his human ſoul was before vitally united, it was not, in a true ſenſe, the man *Chriſt Jeſus*, who was born of the virgin *Mary*, and ſuffer'd under *Pontius Pilate*, that aſcended; but, ſo far as a diſtinction of perſons can be founded in the different parts of matter, whereof their bodies are compos'd, he would have been another, and quite different perſon, born or produc'd again after a quite different manner.

Neither is there the leaſt neceſſity of ſuppoſing, from any inconvenience ariſing from the nature of the thing, that *Chriſt*, when he aſcended, ſhould aſſume a body compos'd of different parts of matter from thoſe whereof it was compos'd before. For all matter, as ſuch, being the ſame, God, by his power, can form the parts of it, after what manner, in what order, or according to what ſyſtem he pleaſes. As he can reduce the particles of the moſt refin'd etherial matter to the moſt groſs conſiſtence; ſo he can ſublimate the moſt groſs parts of terrene matter, to a purity and defecation, to which may be added a capacity of motion; perhaps (if a particular exception ought not to be made, in regard to the glorify'd body of *Chriſt*) beyond what he has already given to any celeſtial matter whatever, or to any particular ſyſtem of it.

With what peculiar qualities the body of *Chriſt*, which aſcended, is now in its glorify'd ſtate endow'd; whether it ſubſiſt by any acceſſory renovation of parts; after what manner any loſs or acceſſion of parts happens to it; or of what kind thoſe parts may be, are queſtions, which, tho' concerning the faithful in a future ſtate of glory; yet not being of any neceſſary importance towards preparing them for it, I ſhall leave to the curiouſly learn'd to reſolve, as well as they can.

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* *John* 20. 17.

WHAT it principally concerns us to know, in reference to our Lord's aſcenſion, is, that his human ſoul, by a local and true tranſlation, in union with his body, was conveyed from earth, through the regions of the air, and the ſuperior intermediate heavens, (not reſting, as ſome hereticks imagin'd, in the body of the ſun) to the higheſt heaven, the ſeat and reſidence of the divine majeſty. The belief of this is abſolutely neceſſary, not only to aſſure us of the merits of *Chriſt*, which entitled him to ſo glorious a reward, but alſo concerning the truth of what is ſo much inſiſted upon in the epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, with reference to his office, as our High Prieſt in heaven, where he continually makes interceſſion for us. For, as in reſpect to his divine nature, he is every where preſent, and ſo could not properly be ſaid to aſcend, neither could he have been our interceſſor, in ſo proper and powerful a manner, but only as God and man united in one perſon. And therefore ſome of the moſt moving arguments, which the apoſtle mentions to repreſent the great advantages of his interceſſion for us, are taken from the conſideration of his being made like unto us; of his being touch'd with the ſenſe of our infirmities; of his having compaſſion on us. Theſe arguments could not have had that force the apoſtle attributes to them, towards confirming our faith, and aſſuring the ſucceſs of our prayers, as they muſt now be neceſſarily ſuppos'd to have, *when we look up to Jeſus the author and finiſher of our faith*, as now ſet down in our own nature, at the right hand of God.

IV. THE place to which he aſcended. *He aſcended into heaven.* Tho' the intermediate regions between the *holy place*, the city of God, and this terraqueous globe, are frequently in ſcripture call'd heavens *; yet heaven, when ſpoken abſolutely, properly denotes that place, where God has choſen to diſcover the immediate and glorious effects of his preſence, the ſeat appointed by him for the reſidence of angels, and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect. The gates were lifted up, and the everlaſting doors open'd to let the King of glory come into that place. There it was that our High Prieſt *enter'd into that within the veil, even into heaven itſelf to appear in the preſence of God for us*; where he ever lives to diſcharge that part of his ſacerdotal office, which conſiſts in interceſſion; and where all his prayers and deſires in our behalf are always heard. There it was, where *he went to prepare a place for us*; and from whence he *will come again*, to the end he may receive us, and after an indiſſoluble manner for ever, *unto himſelf*.

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* *Heb.* 4. 14.—7. 26. *Epheſ.* 4. 10.

CHAP. II.

He aſcended into heaven; and ſitteth on the Right Hand of God.

BY the ſeſſion of our Lord at the right hand of God, we are to underſtand the power and authority, wherewith he is now inveſted in his mediatorial Kingdom; by way of figurative alluſion, to a common uſage of ſecular princes, or magiſtrates, who give the right hand to thoſe whom they deſign to honour by any peculiar marks of favour or diſtinction *. So that, indeed, this ſeſſion of our Saviour does not only denote his ſovereign power and dominion over his creatures †; but the glory wherewith the Father has glorify'd him in his own preſence; and where even his human nature, with reſpect to his body and ſoul, is advanc'd to the higheſt perfection, whereof either of them is reſpectively capable. So that if it be ask'd, whether *Chriſt* may be ſaid to ſit on the right hand of God, with reſpect to both natures, it may be anſwer'd in the affirmative: According to his divine nature, not as if he receiv'd any new acceſſion of glory, or power; but as there was, upon his aſcenſion a new (which will ever be continued) external manifeſtation of that glory, which he had with the Father from the beginning, and before his incarnation. Acccording to his human nature; which was then exalted above all *principalities, and powers, and might and dominions*, and with reſpect to which, the metaphor of his ſitting at the right hand of God, is ſtill more natural and eaſy, on account of the viſible and glorious appearance of his human body, and of the actions proper to it.

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* 1 *Kings* 2. 19. *Pſalm* 45. 9. *Pſalm* 110. 1.

† 1 *Cor.* 15. 25. *Matt.* 28. 18.

What is objected [*] againſt the ſeſſion of *Chriſt* at the right hand of God, from God's ubiquity, lying only againſt a figurative manner of expreſſion, cannot be of any conſequence when we leave the metaphor, or explain it according to the true and proper ſignification of the thing, which is to denote the ſovereign power of *Chriſt*. In which ſenſe it is ſaid, that *hereafter we ſhall ſee the ſon of man ſitting on the right hand of power*. And therefore, according to the different occaſions of manifeſting his power, he is indifferently repreſented ſtanding, as well as ſitting at the right hand of God; more generally ſitting; this being a poſture more proper to him, as our judge; as in the particular caſe of St. *Stephen*, where he appear'd as a protector, it was more agreeable, under that character, to ſhew himſelf ſtanding.

If yet any one will contend for his ſitting at the right hand of God in a more proper ſenſe, it may be ſaid, that God, tho' no where locally circumſcrib'd, yet diſplays the more ſpecial and glorious effects of his preſence, from the throne, on the right hand of which *Chriſt* is ſet down; and conſequently his ſeſſion at God's right hand, will ſtill admit of a ſenſe, which approaches nearer to a literal conſtruction.

But I ſhall take notice a little more particularly concerning an error, as to the ſeſſion of *Chriſt* at the right hand of God; which has been advanc'd and eſpous'd by thoſe, who generally go under the diſtinction of Lutherans; they pretend that the right hand of God, properly, and in our own ſenſe, denoting his power; and God being every where preſent by his power, *Chriſt*, with reſpect to his human body, wherein he is ſet down at the right hand of God, muſt, by neceſſary inference, be ſuppos'd every where preſent too. We do not deny that the right hand of God is a metaphor us'd in ſcripture to denote his power [†]; yet cannot diſcover or allow the conſequence, that he who ſits at the right hand of God, as it ſignifies the power of God, muſt therefore be co-extended, with regard to his corporeal preſence, with the divine power. 1. Becauſe this is, in the nature of the thing, abſolutely impoſſible, and ſuppoſes a penetration of bodies, or that two bodies, and by the ſame reaſon, any given number of bodies, may be in the very ſame place, and yet have a ſeparate and diſtinct poſition in it, at the ſame time: Than which, if we argue from the nature of our ideas, and we have no other way of arguing but from them, there cannot be any thing propos'd more abſurd, or unaccountable to human underſtanding. It is hereby farther ſuppos'd, that our Saviour's body, the body wherewith he roſe from the dead, and aſcended into heaven, which was circumſcrib'd as other human bodies are, and of a like dimenſion, is not now the ſame body, but a body of immenſe magnitude, not only of equal extent with all other bodies, but extending itſelf (for there too God is preſent by his power) beyond the bounds of all other corporeal beings whatever. If this notion, indeed, of the Lutherans had any good or ſolid foundation, an unanſwerable argument might be drawn from it, upon a philoſophical difficulty, to prove, that whatever incorporeal ſpaces there might poſſibly have been before our Lord's aſcenſion into heaven, and his ſeſſion at the right hand of God; yet, in conſequence of them, there neither is, nor can be, in time future, what we call a *vacuum*, whether interſpers'd, or beyond the confines of the world.

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[*] Of the ſame nature is that old objection, that if *Chriſt* ſit on the right hand of God, God, which would be incongruous to the ideas we have of his glory and majeſty, would be plac'd on the left hand of *Chriſt*, and the ſame anſwer will ſerve to it. Thoſe who like St. *Auguſtin*'s better, may find it in the following words. *Si carnaliter acceperimus quòd Chriſtus ſedet ad dextram Patris ille erit ad ſiniſtram. Dextra enim & ſiniſtra eorum, quæ circumſcribuntur ſunt. Dextram autem Patris dicimus gloriam & honorem divinitatis.*

[†] *Iſaiah* 48. 13. *Acts* 11. 33.

2. WE ſay, that the right hand of God, not denoting place, or any local poſition of his being, the omnipreſence, or ubiquity of *Chriſt*'s body, which has relation to place, cannot, by any means, be inferr'd from it; and therefore, this argument owing all its force only to an impropriety of expreſſion, cannot be of any proper or juſt effect to prove, what it is brought by the Lutherans in proof of.

IF it ſtill be urg'd, that, according to our expoſition, the right hand, or power of God, may be where *Chriſt* is not, and ſo there will be a divine power which *Chriſt* has not, we deny this conſequence, and ſay, it is not any local ſite of *Chriſt*'s body, whereon a communication of the divine power to him is founded, but his relation to the Father as his true and proper Son; and in conſequence of the union of the two natures in him. It is ſufficient to ſay, that *Chriſt* is no where, but at the right hand of God; or that, if he be any where at the right hand of God, he is at the right hand of him, and (according to the import of that phraſe) has therefore all the power of him, who is every where. Tho' it is neither neceſſary, nor indeed poſſible, for the reaſons already mention'd, that he ſhould be every where, with reſpect to his human body, of an infinite extent, or, in other words, of the ſame extent, with the power of God.

IT anſwers all the ends of *Chriſt*'s ſeſſion at God's right hand, to ſay, that, in the union of the two natures, as he is both God and man, all *power in heaven and in earth, is now committed to him*; that *in him the fulneſs of the Godhead dwells bodily*; tho' his body ſtill retain all the proper qualities, and affections eſſential to a body.

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Chap. III.

He aſcended into Heaven; and ſitteth on the Right Hand of God, the Father Almighty.

THE words, which I am now to conſider, are, *the Father Almighty*, which have been already explain'd in the firſt article of the creed, and as to the word Father, as it was in the ſame ſenſe, according to which we are here to underſtand it. But the word which in the preſent article is render'd Almighty [*], being, in the original, different from that which is render'd Almighty [†] in the firſt article; it may not be improper to enquire, what the different ſenſe of it here is; and for what particular reaſon we are requir'd to profeſs our belief of God's Almighty power, in that ſenſe. Almighty, in the former article, denotes that ſovereign power and dominion, which God exerciſes over his creatures, more eſpecially as ſuch, and in right both of his creating them, and his preſerving them in being [‡]. Accordingly God declares by the prophet, in virtue of this right; *I have made the earth, and created man upon it. I, even my hands, have ſtretched out the heavens, and all their hoſt have I commanded.* He is on this account ſtyl'd, *Lord of hoſts*; *Lord of heaven*; *Lord of the whole earth*; *Lord of heaven and earth.* In the latter ſenſe, we are to underſtand his abſolute and irreſiſtible power of effecting whatever he deſigns, or is a poſſible object of power; without any relation to his authority, as he is the ſupreme Lord and governor of the world. But having, in a proper place, already enlarg'd concerning the extent of the divine power, in this reſpect, I ſhall not now reſume the ſame argument, but only obſerve why we are here requir'd to profeſs our belief in God the Father Almighty, under this notion of omnipotence. And,

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[*] Παντοδυνάμενος. [†] Παντοκράτωρ.

[‡] And therefore the word is render'd, as Biſhop *Pearſon* obſerves, *Omnitenens*, by *Tertullian* and St. *Auguſtin*; and Παντοκράτορας, by the former of theſe fathers, *Mundipotentes*.

1. The ſeſſion of *Chriſt* at the right hand of God, properly denoting the power whereby he is now inveſted, it was convenient, in the clauſe of the article, to ſpecify the Almighty power of God, as the object of our faith, to ſhew, that *Chriſt*, nevertheleſs, does not exerciſe this power independently, much leſs excluſively of the Father, but in concurrence, and according to the moſt perfect agreement with him. God ſtill retains all the power he ever had, tho' he has, *till the reſtitution of all things, when Chriſt ſhall have deliver'd up the kingdom to him*, given the execution of it into his hands. This, we ſay, muſt ſtill be underſtood with a reſerve to that power which is eſſentially inherent in him as God, and therefore abſolutely inſeparable from him. And indeed, a ſeſſion at the right hand is far from importing, according to the common deſign of men, in giving others that mark of diſtinction, ſuch a communication of their power or authority, whereby they can be interpreted to diveſt themſelves of it; but, at the moſt, only implies a participation of the ſame power and authority radically veſted (by whomſoever it may be executed) in them. Sometimes, indeed, it is only deſign'd as a mark of honour or favour, without ſuppoſing thoſe who are ſo plac'd, as aſſeſſors, in any proper or judicial act of authority. As when *Solomon cauſ'd a ſeat to be ſet for the King's mother* *; and *plac'd her at his right hand*, next to the throne; he did not deſign her any participation of the royal power, much leſs to transfer it in ſuch a manner, as to diſclaim his own right to it; but only intended thereby to ſhew the regard which he ow'd to her as his mother, and to diſtinguiſh her, as the *King's mother*, after the moſt honorary manner.

Another reaſon, why God the Father Almighty is here propos'd as the object of our faith, may be to give us ſtill a greater and more diſtinct idea of the power of *Chriſt*. For if his ſeſſion at the right hand of God denote a communication of the divine power to him, or a proper participation of it, then by profeſſing that God's power is Almighty; we profeſs, by neceſſary implication, that the power of *Chriſt* too is Almighty; that *every word is poſſible to him*; that *in his hand there is power and might; ſo that none is able to withſtand him*; and that *he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth*.

Whatever then the Father doth, is, in the nature of it, poſſible to the Son. As the Father is Almighty, ſo is the Son Almighty; and yet, with reſpect to the divine nature or eſſence, and ſetting aſide the perſonal relation between them, they are not two Almighties, but one Almighty. The Father is Almighty, becauſe he is God. For the ſame reaſon, we ſay the Son is Almighty, as having the ſame foundation, in the Godhead, of omnipotency with the Father; and is therefore, as to all the proper acts and effects of a power truly divine, equally omnipotent as the Father.

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* 1 *Kings* 2. 19.

THE words explain'd in this ſenſe, have, at once, a viſible and direct tendency to animate our hopes in the grace of *Chriſt*, and to excite our fears of his avenging juſtice. If nothing be impoſſible to him that is poſſible to God; if he has an equal power with God *to ſave, and to deſtroy*; then we have the ſame grounds, as on one hand, to live under the moſt awful apprehenſions of his majeſty; ſo, on the other hand, if we render our ſelves proper objects of them, to be aſſur'd of all the happy effects of his love and mercy; and, to conclude, on all accounts, to pay that homage and obedience to him, which could have been due to a juſt, merciful, and *Almighty* God.

Of the CREED.

Article VII.

From thence he ſhall come to judge the quick and the dead.

Chap. I.

From thence he ſhall come to judge.

In this article, we have one very important act of that power and authority ſpecify'd, which we profeſs'd a belief of our Lord's being inveſted with in the former article. This act will conſiſt, when all mankind are ſummon'd before the tribunal of God, in his ſitting, and executing the office of a judge, upon them.

There is no great neceſſity of making a particular enquiry concerning the place from whence he ſhall come to declare his commiſſion, and aſſert his power, to this end; that, the connection of this article with the former, plainly diſcovers to be heaven, the place to which he aſcended, and where he now ſits at the right hand of God; that is the place which muſt contain him until his ſecond coming, when he will immediately repair from thence, to ſeat himſelf in a viſible and glorious throne, attended with myriads of holy angels, to paſs a final, irreverſible ſentence of happineſs or miſery upon men, according to their good or evil actions in this life.

The two things principally to be conſider'd, and after a more diſtinct manner, in this branch of the article, are,

1. The

I. The certainty of a future judgment. And,

II. The perſon who is to be our judge.

I. The certainty, according to what we here profeſs to believe, of a future judgment. We have now a divine authority to ſettle our faith upon, concerning the truth of this fundamental article; and than which, there is no article either of natural or reveal'd religion, that has generally a greater influence on the minds, or morals of men. We have now a ſure word of prophecy to convince us, beyond all poſſibility of doubt, that *God has appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world*; that *he will bring every work into judgment*; that *the Lord cometh, with thouſands of his ſaints, to execute judgment upon all*. A divine authority is deciſive; and in that reſpect better adapted to the common apprehenſions and capacities of men. It is of more force to eſtabliſh the truth of any one propoſition, that God has ſaid it, than all the fine ſayings, or arguments, how ſpecious ſoever, which the wit or reaſon of all mankind can produce upon it. This method of aſcertaining any truth by a divine revelation, is alſo more agreeable to the temper of the generality of men, who, if they ſhould have ſtrength of mind to go through a long and nice examination of any doctrine, yet would not have ſufficient liberty of mind to examine it impartially. For whatever byaſs may be caſt upon our judgment in the ſearch we make, or pretend to make, after truth, (from a particular regard to the opinions or writings of other men, or out of any perſonal prejudice, vanity, or intereſt of our own) that may tend to hinder us from diſcovering the truth, in more intricate controverſies, or perhaps in reference to ſuch of them, as were very plain in themſelves, before the intereſts of this world mingled with them, and till, either through weakneſs or deſign, they were involv'd, by one writer or other, in the utmoſt obſcurity; however, I ſay, men may be diverted, upon any of theſe accounts, from opening their eyes to the light of truth, or from following it; yet there can be no reſiſting the evidence of an expreſs revelation from God (and which we profeſs to believe ſo) concerning a plain matter of fact.

Should it be granted then, that the common arguments are in themſelves concluſive, in proof of a judgment to come; from the natural preſages in the minds of men; of the moſt wicked, and, at certain intervals, the moſt atheiſtical men; and the expectations of all men in general concerning it; or by reaſon of the apprehenſions we are under from the terrors of an unſeen vengeance upon the commiſſion of ſin, eſpecially of certain more heinous ſins, how ſecret ſo ever; or on occaſion of thoſe joyful reports, which are made in our own minds, when we reflect on the good and pious actions done by us, tho' theſe too were done in ſecret, and without regard to any viſible intereſt or reward. Or, again, when we argue from the natural deſires after a ſtate of happineſs, wherewith all men find themſelves invincibly poſſeſs'd, which ſtate, we are convinc'd from the experience of thoſe, who have all the advantages and pleaſures of this world at command, and uſe all the arts they can to improve their taſte of them, is not attainable in this life; and therefore it is highly agreeable to the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, to ſuppoſe, there is another life, wherein it may be attain'd. For to what wiſe or good end has God implanted in the minds of men ſuch ſtrong, ſuch uninterrupted, and general inclinations; if, after all, there be no true or reaſonable foundation for them? When all other creatures, ſo far as we can obſerve, have agreeable entertainment provided for all their natural appetites and affections, ſhall man, the lord of the creation, the nobleſt work in this viſible world, be the only creature, with reſpect to whom, the common laws of creation, and methods of providence, do not here take place? Or ſhall he alone be acted with thoſe deluſory hopes and deſires, which he, who continually impreſſes them, has for ever excluded him from all poſſibility of gratifying? Yet this argument, we allow, rather concludes for the reaſonableneſs of believing a future ſtate, than directly in proof of a future judgment. And becauſe, as I have on a former occaſion obſerv'd, it may be pretended that there is no abſolute neceſſity that theſe two articles ſhould be connected, the proof here urg'd for a future judgment, is only to be conſider'd ſo far of any force, as there may be (and that certainly there are) very probable reaſons, if not neceſſarily concluſive, on ſuppoſition of a future ſtate, for the credibility of a future judgment. Or, laſtly, ſhould it be argued, and this has indeed been in all ages the moſt general and prevailing argument in proof of a future judgment, that it is neceſſary to ſuppoſe it, in order to vindicate the juſtice of divine providence in this world, which ſo promiſcuouſly diſtributes the bleſſings and evils of life to wicked and good men. Should it be farther obſerv'd, that indeed the bleſſings and evils of this life do not appear ſo much to be diſpens'd with an indiſcriminating hand, as frequently, to all appearance, in favour of wicked men *, who flow in wealth and luxury, who are poſſeſs'd of

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* It muſt be acknowledg'd, that the main difficulty, which, in the queſtion concerning theſe promiſcuous events, ſo much perplex'd the minds of men, rather reſpected the proſperity of the wicked, than the ſufferings of the good; there being no man ſo good, but his own conſcience will inform him, he deſerves what he ſuffers, and that he ſuffers even leſs than his iniquities deſerve. It was therefore the proſperous ſtate of wicked men, (tho' the difficulty ariſing from the conſideration of it, is fully ſolv'd by the doctrine of a future

of the powers, the honours, and all the other viſible glories of the world, ſometimes as the very rewards or known effects of their ſins and impieties; whilſt good men are not only expos'd to the greateſt miſeries and calamities of life; but ſometimes, in conſequence of their acting as becomes good men, and upon a principle of ſtrict virtue and religion. Should it be inferr'd from either, or from both of theſe conſiderations, that there is a time coming, wherein a juſt God will vindicate the ſeeming inequalities of ſuch providential events here, from all imputations injurious to his juſtice, by making a viſible and final diſtinction between wicked and good men, and ſeparating them eternally from one another, as a man ſeparates the wheat from the tares, which were ſuffer'd for ſome time to grow up promiſcuouſly together; whatever force, I ſay, there may be in any of theſe arguments ſeparately, or in all of them together, to convince us that there is a judgment to come; yet it muſt be acknowledg'd a mighty advantage that we have a divine authority, and that committed to a ſtanding revelation, to aſſure us, *God has appointed a day wherein he will judge the world.* This is a plain declaration; not depending on a long ſeries of proofs, to which ſome men may not be in a diſpoſition to attend, while others are leſs able to diſcover the connection of them; but which is obvious, and accommodated to every capacity. Let us then, how clear or ſtrong ſoever the natural proofs of a judgment to come may appear, yet ultimately confide, as in a more ſure anchor of hope, in this *faithful ſaying*, and *accept it with all thankfulneſs to God.*

Sect. II.

Concerning the perſon, who is to judge the world.

THAT *Chriſt* is the perſon, who, according to the preſent confeſſion of our faith, is to come to judge the world, will not be diſputed: But this is not what I here intend to beſtow a diſtinct ſection upon, tho' in few words as poſſible. My deſign here,

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future judgment) which appear'd ſo difficultly reconcileable with the juſtice of a divine providence, that it was ſometimes made uſe of as matter of queſtion, whether there was, in truth, any providence.

Τολμῶ κατειπεῖν μήποτ' οὐκ εἰσιν Θεοί,
Κακοὶ γὰρ εὐτυχοῦντες ἐπιπλήττουσί με. Ariſtoph.

here, is to conſider, how our Lord, in reſpect to his character as God and man in one perſon, is peculiarly qualify'd to be our judge.

When we conſider him as man, as ſenſible of the common paſſions and frailties of human nature, as knowing experimentally whereof we are made, and as being touch'd with a feeling of our condition, we have the ſtrongeſt grounds to hope, that the judicial proceedings at the laſt day will be temper'd with all the equity, that the nature or circumſtances of our crimes will admit. If *Chriſt*, abſtracting from his human nature, ſhould appear in all the glory and majeſty of the divine, or diſcover thoſe terrible effects of them, which he did in the delivery of the law on mount *Sinai*, who would be *able to abide his coming, or to endure when he appeareth?* How could the beſt and moſt holy of his ſervants ſo much as bear the thoughts of ſtanding in judgment before him?

" It might, perhaps, have been thought more ſuitable to the " awful ſolemnity of the laſt day, and the dignity and glory " wherein *Chriſt* will then appear, if he had been deſcrib'd un- " der the character of our judge, as the *Son of God, the bright- " neſs of his Father's glory, the expreſs image of his perſon*; or " in thoſe other magnificent terms, wherein he is ſo often ſpoken " of in the prophetical writings. But ſtill it is more ſuitable to " the ſtate and condition of mankind, and his tender compaſſion " towards them, that when he ſpeaks of coming to judge the " word, he ſhould rather give us an idea of his human, than of " his divine nature.

" For, indeed, when we conſider the infinite perfections of " the divine nature, and at what an infinite diſtance our ſins have " ſeparated us from it; had the eternal God himſelf, without the " interpoſal of a mediator, thought fit to convene the world in " judgment before him; alas! the beſt of men would have been " ſo oppreſs'd with the glory of his majeſty, and the ſenſe of their " own demerits, that they muſt of neceſſity, under the beſt grounded " hopes, have ſunk into great deſpondency of mind. But, on the " other hand, when we conſider that our judge has taken upon him " our human nature; that he will appear in it, and knows the infirmi- " ties of it; this is matter of unſpeakable conſolation to penitent " ſinners, under the apprehenſions of all the ſins, with which they " ſtand charg'd; and cannot fail to give them greater boldneſs " of acceſs to their judge, by preventing every anxious thought, " which might ariſe from a conſciouſneſs of their own frailties, " or from any ſuppos'd rigour in his proceedings. He that aſ- " ſum'd our nature, and has done and ſuffer'd ſo much for us in

“ it, will certainly ſhew all the lenity and tenderneſs to it, which
“ can conſiſt with the terms of evangelical obedience. For what
“ the apoſtle ſpeaks of *Jeſus Chriſt*, as our High Prieſt, may,
“ with equal propriety, be apply'd to him, as executing this office
“ of his judiciary and regal power. *We have not a judge,*
“ *who cannot be touch'd with the feeling of our infirmities; but who*
“ *was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without ſin. Let*
“ *us therefore go boldly unto the throne of grace, that we obtain*
“ *mercy, and find grace and help in time of need.*

“ How is it poſſible for the beſt man living, without fear or
“ trembling, to conſider, that he muſt one day ſtand in judgment
“ before a juſt, omniſcient, and all-powerful God, in order to
“ be ſentenc'd to an eternity of happineſs or miſery, according to
“ the good or evil he has done in this life? But if any thing can
“ allay the terror of ſuch a conſideration, it muſt be this; that
“ our judge is the Saviour of the world, the one mediator between
“ God and man, the man *Chriſt Jeſus*.

“ And therefore, it is obſervable, that our Lord himſelf aſſigns
“ his taking our human nature, with the infirmities of it, upon
“ him, as one reaſon, in particular, why God hath conſtituted
“ him to be the judge of the world. *The Father*, ſays he, *hath*
“ *given him authority to execute judgment, becauſe he is the Son of*
“ *man**. And accordingly, in the twentieth chapter of St. *Matthew*'s
“ goſpel, where he more particularly deſcribes the ſolemn
“ and awful proceſs of the laſt judgment, tho' he ſpeaks of it in
“ very high and lofty terms, and repreſents himſelf ſurrounded
“ with myriads of angels, ſitting upon the throne of his glory;
“ yet, to moderate that dread and aſtoniſhment, which would ariſe
“ in the minds of his moſt faithful and true diſciples, from a ſenſe
“ of his divine preſence and majeſty, he is pleas'd, even in the
“ midſt of his triumphs, and all the glorious appearances, wherein
“ his divinity will then ſhine forth, to ſtyle himſelf *the Son of*
“ *man*. It is probably for the ſame reaſon, that the apoſtle,
“ ſpeaking by direction of the Holy Spirit of God, concerning
“ the laſt judgment, tells us, it will be executed, *by the man,*
“ *whom God hath ordain'd*†.

Of affinity with the foregoing conſideration, is that of *Chriſt*'s being, as man, head of the church, and exerciſing, in this capacity, a judicial power over mankind. God having deſign'd to deſtroy the infernal *Babylon*, the powers of darkneſs, and to erect to himſelf a new and holy city, in the privileges whereof, all mankind, who would comply with the conditions of them, might partake;

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* *John* 5. 27. † Serm. vol. 3. p. 170.

it was highly agreeable to the divine wiſdom, that a human perſon ſhould be plac'd at the head of this ſociety, to preſcribe the rules, and exemplify the duties of it; to inform and govern the members which ſhould compoſe it, and according to thoſe rules, and their neglect or performance of thoſe duties, finally to paſs ſentence upon them: And not only ſo, but to puniſh the refractory and contumelious, who ſhould refuſe to come into this ſociety, or the proper deſign of it, by a more ſtrict, holy, and regular courſe of life. But what I here obſerve, more peculiarly relates to us, as profeſs'd and incorporated members of this ſociety; and the inference I would draw from it, is, that the relation, wherein we ſtand to *Chriſt*, as the head of it, gives us that aſſurance of his favour, and his tender compaſſion towards us, when we ſhall be conven'd in judgment before him, which no other relation, that we are capable of conceiving, could have given. And accordingly, tho' I have accounted for thoſe words, *the Father hath given him authority to execute judgment, becauſe he is the Son of man,* upon the former principle; yet St. *Auguſtin* (and they are capable of being explain'd in both ſenſes) reſolves the reaſon of *Chriſt's* judicial power into his character *, as head of the church, tho' there was no neceſſity for his excluding the other ſenſe.

2. It was neceſſary, notwithſtanding, that *the Lord*, by whom we are to be judg'd, ſhould be *God*; that when he comes to execute judgment, *mercy and truth might meet together; righteouſneſs and peace kiſs each other*. The wiſeſt, the beſt of men, and of the moſt penetrating minds, are liable, in judging of what comes before them, to make wrong judgments, from want of evidence, of a perfect knowledge, as to the motives, or other circumſtances of the fact to be enquir'd into, or the ends for which it was done. All which conſiderations tend very much to alter the quality of any action, whether good or evil, and to render it reſpectively more or leſs criminal, or in a like proportion commendable. And yet the deceitfulneſs of human virtue is ſuch, that the conduct of men, even as to the brighteſt part of their character, is often made up of little more than external appearances; but thoſe ſo artfully diſguis'd, that they inevitably miſlead little and weak minds, and ſometimes perſons of the greateſt penetration, into wrong judgments. So that they call *good evil, and evil good; put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter:* Applauding ſuch actions as are done upon the moſt vile and diſhonourable motives, and with the moſt infamous views. Nay, there are certain actions of de-

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* *Non quidem propter conditionem naturæ.——Sed hoc pertinet ad gratiam capitis, quam Chriſtus in humanâ naturâ accepit.* Tract. in Joan.

ſigning men that not only draw the eyes of the world upon them, but recommend them to favour and eſteem; which yet are moſt abominable in the ſight of him, whoſe infinite knowledge peculiarly qualifies him to *judge not according to appearance, but to judge righteous judgment.*

This conſideration, that *the judgment is God's*, not in the original ſenſe of theſe words *, which only denoted that the judges among the *Iſraelites* deriv'd their commiſſion from God, but as it ſignifies God's immediate determination concerning the matter, or perſon to be judg'd, removes all poſſibility of doubt, as to the truth or rectitude of his judgment. And, indeed, if God governs the world, and is to judge it *in righteouſneſs*, the ſame reaſon, upon which we ſuppoſe he will judge it, ſuppoſes him, at the ſame time, omniſcient. It were better, upon the queſtion concerning the happineſs or miſery of men, to all eternity, that there ſhould be no final judgment, than that he who is to be our judge, and from whoſe ſentence there lies no appeal, ſhould be capable of making a wrong judgment.

As we are betray'd, by outward ſhew and appearance, to judge falſly, both concerning other perſons and things, we are alſo very apt to be impos'd upon in the judgment we make of our own actions: Vanity, intereſt, prejudice, or inclination, give ſuch falſe colours to them, that it is ſometimes very difficult for us to diſcover the grounds of them, in a true light. So that it happens, on certain occaſions, even while we imagine we are doing our duty, or deſerve applauſe for what we do, God, whoſe thoughts are not as our thoughts, and who perfectly ſees the ſecret ſprings that put us in motion, is highly diſpleas'd and offended with us. Let us take the beſt care we can, our hearts will ſtill be deceitful, and apt to impoſe upon us. God only, *who is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things*, can infallibly judge concerning the merits of our intentions and behaviour, when he ſits in judgment upon them. We may have reaſonable and well-grounded hopes of our own ſincerity, according to the preſent diſpoſition of mind, which we are in: But we may not be ſo perfectly aſſur'd, whether any previous, ſiniſter cauſe, which may now have eſcap'd our memory, did not concur towards the good we do, or the particular manner of doing it.

As the judgments of God therefore are *true and righteous altogether*, and his judgments only, he appropriates to himſelf the right of *bringing every work into judgment, with every ſecret thing* †: For *the darkneſs hideth not from him* ‡. *He knoweth the hearts of*

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* *Deut.* 1. 17. † *Eccleſ.* 12. 14. ‡ *Pſalm* 139. 12.

all men[*]; *and underſtandeth all the imaginations of their thoughts*[†]. *He knoweth the things that come into our mind, every one of them*[‡]; *and no thought can be witholden from him*[**]. *There is not a word in our tongues, but he knoweth it altogether*[††].

It is our duty, nevertheleſs, to examine, with all the care we can, our own conſciences; and we may, upon a ſtrict examination of them, have, if not abſolutely an infallible, yet a moral and well-grounded aſſurance, ſufficient for our comfort and ſatisfaction, that the reports they make to us concerning our good or evil actions are honeſt and true. At the laſt day too, when *God ſhall judge the ſecrets of men by Jeſus Chriſt*, they are repreſented as *accus'd, or elſe excus'd, by their own conſciences*. But, it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, the minds of men will then be open'd to the light and reflections of conſcience, after a different manner from what they are at preſent. Who knows whether they will not, to prevent too great a delay of the judicial proceſs, be ſo illuminated, as to have a clear and perfect view, if not perhaps a full view, at once, of all the actions, and all the circumſtances of them, which they did in this life; immediately upon God's producing *the book of remembrance* concerning them, *which was written before him*[‡‡]? Then will be preſented to their minds ſeveral things, which they had wholly, or in too ſlight a manner, paſs'd over their accounts of in this life: And thoſe crimes, which give them here no great pain or uneaſineſs of mind, and which they charg'd upon inadvertency or ſurprize, upon weakneſs, or their conſidering them, as the mere common effects of human frailty, will be reſolv'd into their true principles, and appear to carry in them a far more malignant guilt than they apprehend. As, on the other hand, in the light wherein we ſhall diſcover our good actions, all the impure mixtures of ſelf-love, which enter'd into the compoſition of them, (which are now often conceal'd from us, and induſtriouſly by our own fault) will then appear, to diveſt us of that merit, which we were willing to arrogate to our ſelves in them. So that, in many reſpects, while we imagin'd we were doing our duty, we ſhall plainly perceive, that we were, in truth, only following our inclination, or perhaps gratifying our vanity. Who can tell what the force and activity of a pure ſpirit may be, when diſengag'd from the corruptible body, and the laws of union with it, which now preſſes it down, and, by virtue of that union, obſtructs or retards the proper motions of it?

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[*] *Acts* 1. 24.

[†] 1 *Chron.* 28. 9.

[‡] *Ezek.* 11. 5.

[**] *Job* 42. 2.

[††] *Pſalm* 139. 4.

[‡‡] *Mal.* 3. 16.

What is here ſuppos'd may be thought more probable, if we do but conſider the light, which ſometimes appears to diffuſe itſelf in the minds of dying ſinners, and occaſions that quick comprehenſive view of their ſins, and, in conſequence, that pungent ſenſe of them, which till then they were never ſenſible of. Some perſons, who have been recover'd, by a ſpecial mercy of God, out of the very jaws of death, and when the ligaments, which now tie the body and ſoul together, were in part, or in great meaſure, broken, and ſo the ſoul left more at liberty, to act according to the natural force of it, may poſſibly have experienc'd ſome degree of that light, the kind whereof I here mention; *a light*, like the word of God, *quick and powerful; and ſharper than any two-edged ſword, piercing even unto the dividing aſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and of the joints and marrow; a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*; and whereby the whole ſeries of their paſt ſins and offences was repreſented to them with their more aggravating circumſtances, after a manner, and with a force unknown before.

I do not at all doubt but there are perſons now living, who can atteſt the truth of what is here obſerv'd, from their own experience. The greateſt wonder is, (but what account can be given of the infatuation we are under in this body of ſin and death) that they, who have *been once thus enlightned, and taſted of the heavenly gift, and the powers of the world to come*, ſhould be able ſo far to deface the ſtrong and deep impreſſions then made on them, as in any future time of temptation, or under the moſt violent circumſtances of it, *to fall away*.

This may ſerve to give us ſome account, how the ſouls of the moſt ſtupid and relentleſs ſinners in this life, when the veil under which they now ſee their guilt ſo very imperfectly, ſhall be remov'd, will, in a future life, diſcover the folly, the ridiculouſneſs, and deformity of their ſins by an inward light more inſupportable to them, in the reflections it cauſes them to make, than the external flames of hell itſelf.

However, as we are capable, when moſt of all enlightned, of making wrong judgments, and we are to be judg'd by the ſecret intents of the heart, which God alone perfectly knows the motions and true ſtate of, in order to our having a true, infallible, and final award paſs'd upon us in the day of judgment, it was neceſſary, that he, who *knows all things, and all men, and needs not that any ſhould teſtify of man, and who knows what is in man* *, ſhould be our judge. This argument, indeed, why he ſhould be ſo, is plainly inſinuated in the following exhortation of the apoſtle. *Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkneſs, and will make manifeſt the counſels of the heart, and then ſhall every man,* as he truly deſerves, *have praiſe of God*[*].

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* *Col.* 2. 3. *John* 2. 24, 25.

CHAP. II.

From thence he ſhall come to judge the quick and the dead.

IN the former part of the article, we profeſs to believe a future judgment, and by whom we are to be judg'd. We are here to conſider the ſubjects of judgment more eſpecially in regard to mankind; and thoſe are all men, comprehended, as to all other diſtinctions, under this one diſtinction, of *the quick and the dead*. Thoſe who never taſted death, ſhall be judg'd, as thoſe who ſhall be rais'd to life again, for that end, from the dead.

THIS doctrine is founded upon plain teſtimonies of ſcripture. *Chriſt was ordain'd of God to be the judge of quick and dead*[†]. *He ſhall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom*[‡]. *He is ready to judge the quick and the dead*[**]. There is no way of evading the argument we draw from theſe words, to prove, that at the day of judgment thoſe who are alive ſhall be judg'd, as well as thoſe who had been really in the ſtate of the dead, but by ſaying, that the words *dead* and *alive*, are not to be underſtood in theſe paſſages as literally ſpoken, but only in a figurative and metaphorical ſenſe; as when men are term'd dead in treſpaſſes and ſins; when they are exhorted to *be dead unto ſin, but alive unto God*. There is a paſſage to the former purpoſe in the fifteenth chapter of the firſt epiſtle to the *Corinthians*; about which, interpreters have been long and very much perplex'd. The apoſtle there puts the queſtion; *What ſhall they do who are baptiz'd for the dead; if the dead riſe not at all, why are they then baptiz'd for the dead?* That is, to what end do we expoſe our ſelves to the greateſt ſufferings and perſecutions of this world, in preaching the goſpel for the ſake and benefit of infidels, who, with reſpect to the life and power of the true religion, I here, according to a uſual metaphor, term dead; if there be no reſurrection, or future ſtate, why do we endeavour their converſion at the hazard of every thing that is dear, or valuable to us in this life? As the whole text, in a manner, is made up of figurative expreſſions, and the ſenſe we ſeverally put upon them, is juſtify'd by the like expreſſion in other places of ſcripture, and by the reaſonableneſs of putting the like conſtruction upon them here, it does not ſeem improbable that this, after all, may be the true ſenſe. That to do any thing for another perſon ſignifies what is done to be deſign'd in favour, or for the benefit of that perſon, is evident from ſo many paſſages in the New Teſtament, that this ſenſe of the expreſſion will not be diſputed. That to be baptized may juſtly be interpreted to ſignify the being expos'd to ſufferings and perſecutions, is evident from theſe words of our Saviour, ſpeaking of his paſſion; *I have a baptiſm to be baptized with*. And indeed the whole context, if regard be had to it, requires, that the words ſhould be explain'd in this ſenſe; particularly the verſe immediately following, wherein the ſame thread of argument is purſued, and which ſeems to be deſign'd as explanatory of it: And *why ſtand we*, while we are thus endeavouring to convert the heathen world, *in jeopardy every hour* *. There will be no diſpute as to the word *dead*; it is (and upon that occaſion I have gone a little out of my way to explain this text) confeſſedly a figurative expreſſion, to ſignify men in a ſinful or unregenerate ſtate; or men of this world not profeſſing the true faith, or not living in the true fear of God. In this ſenſe it is us'd by our bleſſed Saviour himſelf; *Suffer the dead to go and bury the dead*. Which paſſage therefore obviates another difficulty, which may be rais'd againſt the explication that has been given of theſe words, from the uſe of the word *dead* in the ſame ſentence, both in a literal and metaphorical ſenſe. For if ſuch a uſe of it was here made, as we muſt neceſſarily acknowledge it was, by our Saviour, why might it not alſo, after his example, be made by the apoſtle? But tho' the term *dead* is ſometimes taken in an improper ſenſe, where the context or reaſon of the thing obliges us to conſider and explain it in that ſenſe; yet the literal acceptation of words ſhould always be kept to, where there is no ſuch viſible occaſion of departing from it. Now the manner of *Chriſt*'s coming to judgment, as repreſented in ſcripture, when men ſhall be eating and drinking, as in the days of *Noah*; as marrying and giving in marriage ſuppoſes that they ſhall be judg'd at the ſame time with the dead, and immediately upon their diſcovering theſe real and proper actions of life; or elſe that they ſhall be reſerv'd for a ſeparate and diſtinct time of judgment. But there is no appearance in ſcripture, that our Saviour will ſit ſeparately in judgment upon the dead and the living. *All nations ſhall then be gathered before him. He ſhall ſend his angels with a great ſound of the trumpet, and they ſhall gather together his elect, from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.* And when they are thus gathered together, they ſhall be plac'd on his right hand, and the wicked on his left, and the final ſentence be there reſpectively pronounc'd upon them. Upon the elect; *Come, ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world.* Upon the wicked; *Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.* This is the ſcripture account of the general and laſt judgment; there are no grounds from them, or in reaſon, to believe, there will be two judgments. And if but one judgment, and all mankind are to be judg'd, then thoſe who are alive at the coming of our Lord muſt of neceſſity be judg'd, and at the ſame time, with thoſe who ſhall be rais'd to life again to that end. There is but one thing which has the leaſt ſhew of an objection, that lies againſt what is here aſſerted. It is ſaid; that thoſe, who, at our Saviour's firſt appearance, are alive, ſhall immediately die, and after death revive again, to be judg'd together with thoſe, who are rais'd out of their graves. This objection has no other ground but thoſe paſſages in ſcripture, wherein it is declar'd, that all men ſhall die; particularly, where the Holy Spirit declares, *it is appointed for all men once to die, and after this the judgment.* But there is no neceſſity of interpreting theſe words concerning every particular perſon, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, (for then no one perſon could ever have been tranſlated) but only concerning the ſtate and condition of mankind in general. There are, on the other hand, two or three plain texts of ſcripture, which directly prove, that thoſe, who are alive at the appearing of *Chriſt* ſhall not die, in a ſtrict ſenſe; but only ſuffer ſuch a change in their bodies, as may be proper to qualify them for an entrance into that future ſtate, to which they ſhall be conſign'd. *We*, ſays the apoſtle *, *which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, ſhall not prevent them which are aſleep. For the Lord himſelf ſhall deſcend from heaven with a ſhout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God; and the dead in Chriſt ſhall riſe firſt. Then we which are alive,*

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[*] 1 *Cor.* 4. 5.

[†] *Acts* 10. 42.

[‡] 2 *Tim.* 4. 1.

[**] 1 *Pet.* 4. 5.

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* 1 *Cor.* 15. 29, 30.

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* 1 *Theſſ.* 4. 15, 16, 16.

and remain, ſhall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and ſo ſhall we be ever with the Lord. To this effect the apoſtle argues in another place. *We ſhall not all ſleep, but we ſhall all be chang'd* *. And in the following verſe, *the dead ſhall be rais'd incorruptible, and we ſhall be chang'd.* It plainly appears from the former paſſage, that thoſe who are alive when our Saviour comes to judge the world, ſhall not paſs through a ſtate of death in order to be rais'd again to judgment. And from the two latter texts, we have the reaſon inſinuated why there is no neceſſity for their paſſing through a ſtate of death to that end; becauſe they ſhall ſuffer a change proper to the ſtate, to which they ſhall be judg'd; tho' it is not now neceſſary for us diſtinctly to know, wherein that change is to conſiſt, or after what manner it will be effected.

Of the CREED.

ARTICLE VIII.

I believe in the Holy Ghoſt.

CHAP. I.

I believe in.

I *Believe*, which ſtands at the head of the creed, but is to be underſtood as prefix'd to all the ſubſequent articles, and to every branch of them in it, is here, upon the confeſſion we make of our faith in the Holy Ghoſt, expreſly repeated. Tho' this repetition, indeed, was not made in ſeveral of the ancient creeds, which only connected the other articles with it, and as they are connected with one another, by a conjunction. Tho' in ſome creeds this profeſſion of our faith was alſo particularly ſpecify'd before the ſecond article, relating to the perſon and character of the Son: And the reaſon why it is now there omitted, yet repeated in this article, may be, that the divinity of the Holy Ghoſt, to which I may add his perſonality, have been more diſputed, than either the divine nature, or perſonal ſubſiſtence of the Son, in the unity of the Godhead. Tho' we have, if not ſo great variety of proofs, yet equally clear and ſatisfactory proofs, in both reſpects, when the Holy Ghoſt, as when the Son is propos'd as the object of our faith. Upon this account, it is probable, that the repetition here made, notwithſtanding it was omitted in the ancient creeds, yet was thought proper to be retain'd in the *Roman* creed; as hereby we are not only ſuppos'd to confeſs that we believe the Holy Ghoſt to be, in a true and proper ſenſe, a perſon, but to be alſo, in truth a divine perſon; the object of our love and hope, of our truſt and adoration; equal to the other two perſons, with reſpect to his Godhead, tho' conſider'd as inferior, with reſpect to the order, according to which he ſubſiſts in it; and the foundation whereof, we expreſs by his proceeding from them both.

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* 1 Cor. 15. 51.

In this article therefore, we do not barely profeſs that there is a Holy Ghoſt, but to believe that he is truly and eſſentially God; and that we ought therefore to pay him the duties of love and affiance, of dependence and worſhip, as God; the ſame duties which are ſuppos'd incumbent on us when, in the firſt article, we profeſs to believe in God the Father. What is here ſaid, is perfectly agreeable to the doctrine of the fifth article of our church; whereby it is declar'd, that, *the Holy Ghoſt, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one ſubſtance, majeſty, and glory, with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.*

But becauſe the principal arguments againſt the doctrine of the Trinity have been already conſider'd, and do not, in point of reaſon, particularly lie againſt the divinity of the Holy Ghoſt, but againſt the doctrine of a plurality of divine perſons in general; (for it is equally reconcileable to all our ideas of the divine nature, that there ſhould be three, as that there ſhould be two perſons in the unity of it:) Therefore I ſhall not have occaſion to add any thing farther concerning the Holy Ghoſt, as, ſtrictly ſpeaking, the third perſon of the ever-bleſſed Trinity, but confine my ſelf, under the next head, to ſhew, that he is, in a proper ſenſe, a perſon; a perſon truly divine; and having done this, to conſider, what we are to conceive, as to his proceſſion, and what are, or have been his offices, extraordinary and ordinary, in relation to us, or to the church of God.

Chap. II.

I believe in the Holy Ghoſt.

I Am to ſhew, in the firſt place, under this head, according to the method propos'd, that the Holy Ghoſt is properly a perſon, and not, as the Sabellians maintain'd, a mere quality, power, or operation of the divine being. Which hereſy, ſo ſoon as it began to ſpread itſelf, was univerſally condemn'd by the orthodox *. Yet we do not deny, that, according to a uſual metonymy in ſcripture, and profane authors, of the effect for the cauſe, the graces of the Holy Spirit influencing the minds or hearts of men, are call'd by the name of the Holy Spirit. In this ſenſe it is urg'd, that God declares he will *pour out his Spirit upon all fleſh*; that *where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*; that *the Holy Ghoſt dwelleth in us*; and that *God will give his Spirit to every one that asks it*. But how does it follow, if the Holy Ghoſt be ſometimes us'd in a figurative ſenſe, therefore it is never us'd in the holy ſcriptures in a proper ſenſe, or as denoting him a true perſonal agent; eſpecially where ſuch actions are attributed to him, as cannot, with any propriety, be attributed either to the perſon of the Father, or of the Son. If we can really ſhew, that the ſcriptures do ſpeak of certain actions belonging, in ſo peculiar a ſenſe, to him, then all the arguments from other figurative expreſſions of ſcripture, whether particularly reſpecting his operations, or of a like kind, where perſonal actions are aſcrib'd to mere qualities; (as when it is ſaid, *Charity ſuffereth long, and is kind; Charity envieth not; Charity vaunteth not itſelf; is not puffed up; doth not behave itſelf unſeemly.)* Theſe arguments, we ſay, will conclude nothing againſt the perſonal ſubſiſtence of the Holy Spirit in the divine nature, and that it might, with equal appearance of reaſon, be argued, theſe perſonal actions being attributed to charity, therefore the man, in or by whom charity thus operates, is not a perſonal agent.

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* Dr. *Cudworth* particularly obſerves, that the orthodox Anti-arian fathers did all of them zealouſly condemn Sabellianiſm; the doctrine whereof is no other than this, that there was but one hypoſtaſis, or ſingular individual eſſence of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt; and conſequently, that they were indeed but three ſeveral names, or notions, or modes of one and the ſelf-ſame thing. From whence ſuch abſurdities as theſe would follow, that the Father's begetting the Son, was nothing but one name, notion, or mode of the deity's begetting another; or elſe the ſame deity under one notion, begetting itſelf under another notion: And when, again, the Son, or Word, is ſaid to have been incarnate, and to have ſuffer'd death for us upon the croſs; that it was nothing but a mere logical mode of the deity, that was incarnate and ſuffer'd, or elſe the whole deity under one particular notion or mode only. *Intell. Syſt. p.* 605. So that what *Juſtin Martyr* obſerves, in his dialogue with *Trypho* the *Jew*, that the Son, or the Λόγος was not ὀνόματι μόνον, ἀλλὰ ϗ ἀριθμῷ ἕτερόν τι, not only another in name from the Father, but in number, or by way of perſonal ſubſiſtence, is equally applicable, and, in the ſenſe of all the orthodox fathers, to the Holy Ghoſt.

Now, to confirm what we here aſſert, concerning the perſonality of the Holy Ghoſt, certain actions are really attributed to him in the ſame ſenſe, and according to as full and ſignificant a manner of expreſſion, as they could have been attributed to him, on ſuppoſition of his having been really a perſon. He promiſes his apoſtles, upon his departure from them, to *ſend the Comforter that he may abide with them for ever* *. He ſpeaks of him, as he would have done of a true and real perſon. *The world cannot receive him, becauſe it ſeeth him not, neither knoweth him* †. He tells them, if he go not away, the Comforter will not come to them; but if he go away, he will ſend him unto them ‡. All theſe expreſſions have reference to ſo many diſtinct perſonal actions, and ſo viſibly, that had our Saviour really deſign'd to deſcribe the Holy Ghoſt as, in a proper ſenſe, a perſon, there could have been no occaſion for deſcribing him in more ſtrong or proper terms. But, to ſhew yet farther, that, by the character of the Holy Ghoſt, we are to underſtand ſomething more than the bare effuſion, or power of divine grace; he is join'd in the tenour of the ſame commiſſion, which the apoſtles receiv'd to preach and baptize, with the Father, and the Son. But to authorize them to preach, as that commiſſion runs, in the name of a quality, power, or operation, was a way of ſpeaking, eſpecially upon an occaſion when all equivocal expreſſions were to be avoided, no leſs inconvenient than unuſual. It was alſo, could it in any caſe be admitted, yet in that place very improper, as being altogether redundant and unneceſſary. All the power of God, and of *Chriſt*, which was requiſite to render their commiſſion authentick, and to ſupport them in the diſcharge of it, being already granted in their names.

But St. *Paul*, in ſpeaking concerning the different diſtributions of divine grace by the Holy Spirit, ſtill puts the queſtion relating to his perſonality more out of all doubt. For thoſe different diſtributions plainly import, ſo far as we can argue from the moſt proper and natural ſignification of words, a difference between the gift or operation, and the principle from which it flows: That principle is expreſſly term'd the Holy Ghoſt. If therefore there be any difference between the cauſe and the effect, the Holy Spirit muſt be underſtood as a principle diſtinct from his gifts: And that principle not being God the Father, or the Son, but mention'd as a diſtinct principle, and by a diſtinct name from them, and as having perſonal actions really attributed to him, muſt of neceſſity conſtitute a diſtinct perſon from them.

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* *John* 14. 16. † ℣. 17. ‡ Ch. 16. 17.

There is one action, in particular, which ſuppoſes an impropriety, that cannot be accounted for, in making the Holy Spirit no more than a divine power or quality; however by a more harſh metaphor, God may be ſaid to ſend a power or a quality, or to ſpeak of that power in terms, which might be properly apply'd to denote a perſon; yet to ſay, that the power ſent by him, tho' it has no perſonal ſubſiſtence, intercedes to him, as the Holy Spirit is confeſſed to do, would be, in other words, ſince we cannot diſtinguiſh the power of God from his eſſence, to ſay, that he intercedes to himſelf.

But, indeed, the greateſt, and moſt diſtinguiſhing character of any perſonal agent, is, and this brings the perſonality of the Holy Ghoſt ſtill nearer to our common way of conceiving things; that he is a voluntary and free agent. Now the *ſelf-ſame Spirit* is not only repreſented by the apoſtle as working very different effects upon men, but as *dividing to every man ſeverally as* he will.

Should it then be granted farther, and contrary to what we have been arguing, that a quality may be ſaid, after a manner not altogether improper, to be ſent, to come, to go, or to abide with men, and even to intercede to the perſon by whom it is commiſſion'd; yet no forms of ſpeech can juſtify our aſcribing to a quality a diſtinct, proper, and arbitrary power of choice.

II. If the Holy Ghoſt be a perſon, there will be little occaſion to inſiſt upon the proofs of his being a divine perſon; ſeeing thoſe very arguments which conclude for his perſonality, would certainly, had we no other, conclude very ſtrongly in proof of his divinity. His being equally join'd in granting the ſame commiſſion with the Father and the Son, which ſuppoſes an equal power: His miſſion to guide men into all truth, which ſuppoſes him omniſcient: His being ſaid to dwell in our bodies, as in his own temple, which yet are call'd the *temple of God*, and *the members of Chriſt*, ſuppoſes that our prayers and adorations, and all other acts of divine worſhip, ought equally to be addreſs'd to him. All theſe arguments, we infer, prove him, by direct implication, to be really and truly God. For it is not to be imagin'd, that the ſupreme being, ſhould diſtinguiſh any perſon or being, who is not truly God, not only by attributing to him his proper and eſſential perfections, but by permitting him to ſhare in common all the honours of divine worſhip, and every act of homage and adoration, proper to it; to be join'd with the Father and the Son in the form of baptiſm, in the doxologies, in the apoſtolical benedictions, ſome of which, in the natural ſenſe of them, imply an invocation to him. What poſſible grounds can we have to believe, that God, who is ſo jealous of his honour, who has ſo expreſſly declar'd, that he will not give his glory to another, and who cannot, conſiſtently with the perfections of his nature, give it to another, ſhould yet admit any perſon, who is not truly God, to an equal participation with him, in the moſt ſolemn rites, acts, and expreſſions of divine worſhip.

Besides theſe characters of divine authority and omniſcience attributed to the Holy Spirit, and his partaking with the Father and the Son in the acts of divine worſhip, the grace of ſanctification, his peculiar work, *the power of juſtiſying us* *, the nature of the offences committed againſt him, which are, in ſome reſpects, more unpardonable than thoſe committed againſt the Son, or even againſt the Father himſelf †, neceſſarily ſuppoſe him, if he be a perſon, to be a divine perſon; theſe being powers and characters proper only to the divine being, and which cannot belong to any creature.

It is farther urg'd for the divinity of the Holy Ghoſt, that he is call'd God, not in a metaphorical, but in a proper ſenſe. *Why*, ſaith St. *Peter* to *Ananias*, *hath Satan fill'd thy heart to lye unto the Holy Ghoſt? Thou haſt not lyed unto men, but unto God.* The ſame action whereby the Holy Ghoſt was affronted, is ſaid, in other words, to be lying to God; and therefore, according to the moſt natural conſtruction of them, muſt be interpreted to terminate on the ſame object. When it is ſaid again, that *all ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God*; and yet that the prophets ſpake, *as they were mov'd by the Spirit of God* ‡; the ſame effect being attributed to the Holy Ghoſt and to God, and on the ſame occaſion, does imply, that the name of God, tho' not directly apply'd, yet is, in the reaſon of the thing, communicable to the Holy Ghoſt. We draw the ſame inference from the words of the apoſtle, where *the temple of the Holy Ghoſt*, and *the temple of God*, are indifferently us'd to ſignify and expreſs the ſame temple **.

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[*] 1 *Cor.* 6. 11. [†] *Matt.* 12. 31, 32. [‡] 2 *Tim.* 3. 16. 2 *Pet.* 1. 21.

[**] 1 *Cor.* 3. 16. 6. 19. 3. 17.

SHOULD it be ſaid, that the Holy Ghoſt is only call'd or ſuppos'd God, in theſe paſſages, according to an improper way of ſpeaking; as *Moſes* was ſaid to be a *God unto Pharaoh*, or as civil magiſtrates are call'd Gods, in right of their acting by an authority deriv'd from God; beſides that there are ſome conſiderable circumſtances in the texts, which will not admit of that evaſion, the reaſons already mention'd, upon which the perfections, powers, and worſhip of the true God, are attributed to the Holy Ghoſt, cannot admit of it; but evidently imply, that *tho' there are, who are call'd gods many; yet to us there is but one God*; one that ought to be call'd ſo, in a ſtrict and abſolute ſenſe, tho' the revelation he has made to us, obliges to aſſert three perſons in the unity of the Godhead. I am to enquire,

III. How we are to conceive, that the Holy Ghoſt, whom we have prov'd to be a perſon, and a divine perſon, derives his origin as ſuch? The manner whereof we expreſs, by his proceeding from the Father and the Son. An expreſſion deſign'd to ſignify, ſo far as we are able to form any idea of an act, for which we are forc'd to uſe a borrow'd term, what the relation of the Holy Ghoſt in the ever-bleſſed Trinity is founded upon; but which we are juſtify'd in the uſe of by authority of the holy ſcriptures. And, indeed, in ſo difficult a point, it is the ſafeſt way for us to be wiſe unto ſobriety, and to keep, as near as we can, to the light, which the ſcripture language gives us into it; and not to amuſe our ſelves with nice and curious enquiries, how the Holy Ghoſt proceeded, or after what manner his proceſſion is to be conſider'd, as diſtinct from the generation of the Son. If, in ſome caſes, we are oblig'd by our adverſaries to explain our ſelves after a more diſtinct manner, than the very terms and expreſſions in ſcripture will allow, we ſhould endeavour, at leaſt, only to make uſe of ſuch forms of ſpeech, as moſt naturally ariſe out of them. Now ſo far the reaſon of diſtinguiſhing between the generation of the Son, and the proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, does appear not to be ill founded; that the ſecond perſon being ſtyl'd the Son, it is more agreeable to that relation, and our common way of conceiving the foundation of it, that he ſhould be ſaid to be generated; as the Holy Ghoſt, being repreſented to us under the name and character of a Spirit, it is more agreeable to our conceiving the manner of his ſubſiſting in the Godhead, by way of proceſſion or *ſpiration*. And as he is the third perſon, it is alſo more reaſonable for us to ſuppoſe, that he ſhould derive from both the other perſons; and that the Son, being the ſecond perſon, ſhould derive from the Father only. There have been warm diſputes, upon this point, in the church, and which contributed very much to diſturb the peace of it. In the council of *Conſtantinople* it was only declar'd, that the Holy Ghoſt proceeded from the Father. And the council of *Epheſus* determin'd, that no addition ſhould be made to the *Conſtantinopolitan* creed. The *Latins* afterwards, contrary to the determination of that council, aſſerting, that the Holy Ghoſt proceeded from the Father and the Son, were condemn'd by the *Greeks* for adding to the faith. The *Greeks*, in their turn, were condemn'd by thoſe of the Weſtern church, as injurious to the dignity of the Son, and detracting from what ought to be attributed to him in the proceſſion of the Holy Ghoſt.

WITHOUT conſidering the arguments for the different deciſions of the *Greeks* and *Latins* in this controverſy, it appears, upon a general view of it, more reaſonable to follow the doctrine of the Weſtern church, and to believe, that the Holy Ghoſt proceeded from the Father and the Son. For tho' it is only ſaid in ſcripture, that the *Spirit proceedeth from the Father* *; yet that theſe words are not excluſive of the Son, appears from the former part of the verſe, where *Chriſt* tells his apoſtles, he *will ſend the Comforter unto them from the Father*; as in the preceding chapter he had told them, *the Father would ſend the Spirit in his name*. Which expreſſions denoting an equal power and authority in the Father and the Son, with reſpect to the miſſion of the Holy Ghoſt, there is reaſon to conclude, that power was founded in his proceeding equally from both. This muſt be granted, at leaſt, that there being in the unity of the divine eſſence three perſons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghoſt, which ſubſiſt according to a certain order in it, there is nothing unreaſonable in ſuppoſing, if we argue from the nature of the thing, and were the ſcriptures wholly ſilent as to the point in queſtion, that the third perſon derives both from the Father and the Son.

IV. I propos'd to conſider, in the laſt place, under this head, the more peculiar offices of the Holy Ghoſt, in relation to the church of God, whether extraordinary, or ordinary.

THE extraordinary effects of his operation, when *Chriſt* was conceiv'd †; of his appearance, when he viſibly deſcended at the baptiſm of *Chriſt*, *like a dove* ‡, or after the manner, not, as the words are commonly underſtood, in the ſhape of a dove, and which has given occaſion to a ſuperſtitious practice, to ſay no worſe, of painting the Holy Spirit in that ſhape. The diſpoſſeſſion of *devils*, *by his power* **; *his guiding the apoſtles into all truth*; *his teaching them all things*; *his bringing all things to their remembrance*,

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* *John* 15. 26. † *Mat.* 1. 21. ‡ Ch. 3. 16. ** Ch. 12. 28.

remembrance, whatever Chriſt had ſaid unto them, and his ſhewing them things to come [*]. The gifts of *healing, working of miracles; of prophecy, diſcerning of ſpirits, divers kinds of tongues, and the interpretation of tongues* [†]; theſe, we ſay, and other extraordinary graces and effects of the Holy Spirit, being now ceas'd, with the occaſions of them, the reaſon and neceſſity of continuing them, is of conſequence ceas'd alſo.

MIRACLES are God's ſtrange work, which ſometimes he operates for the conviction of unbelievers; or perhaps in order to the converſion of ſinners; where the ſpecial reaſons of his grace and providence may require, that he ſhould aſſert the truth or power of religion in a more remarkable and awakening manner; to the end *men may know, that he is the Lord, who exerciſeth judgment and loving-kindneſs in the earth*. But when the means of attaining this end have been once thus eminently afforded; when unbelievers have all the moral evidence, that can reaſonably be deſir'd, to convince them of the truth; and ſinners all the rational and proper motives, which ſhould perſuade them to the practice of religion: And when all men, in general, may be aſſur'd, not only from the light of natural reaſon, but by arguments drawn from the moſt authentick, and beſt atteſted facts, that there is *a God, who judgeth in the earth; a law-giver, who is able to ſave and to deſtroy*; it is not then ſo agreeable to the ſimplicity of the divine action or conduct, that God ſhould continually interpoſe by a ſeries of miracles, or by any extraordinary events, towards accompliſhing the ſame end. If men are in a diſpoſition to be convinc'd, or to grow better, they have already the requiſite means of conviction, and a more holy life; but if they are not in that diſpoſition, neither would they, in either reſpect, be perſuaded by any new miracle, or any number of miracles whatever; but ſtill ſee them, like the Jews, with *a veil over their eyes*.

BUT the reaſons of the ordinary offices of the Holy Ghoſt, which conſiſt, as he is our *guide*, in enlightning *the eyes of our underſtanding* [‡], *that we may know what is the hope of the calling of God*; in enabling *us to hold faſt the form of ſound words, which we have heard; and to keep that which has been committed unto us* [**], with a more immediate regard to his office, as the *Comforter*, which conſiſts in cauſing *us to abound in hope, and to be fill'd with all joy and peace in believing, and in his ſhedding the love of God abroad in our hearts* [††]. And again, with a ſpecial reſpect to his office, as our *Sanctifier*, which conſiſts *in his purifying our*

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[*] *John* 16. 13. 14. 26. 16. 3.

[†] 1 *Cor.* 12. 8, 9, 10, 11.

[‡] *Epheſ.* 1. 17, 18.

[**] 2 *Tim.* 1. 13, 14.

[††] *Rom.* 15. 13. 5. 5.

ſouls in obeying the truth; and ſtrengthning us by his might in the inner man; and healing our infirmities *. Or, laſtly, if we conſider him in the abſence of *Chriſt*, as preſiding in his church; with regard to which character, it is his office to *feed it*; to *appoint overſeers in it*; to *ſave us by the waſhing of regeneration*; and to *baptize us into one body* †. In a word, to give that benediction and efficacy to every inſtitution of God, which it has of itſelf no natural power or propriety to operate. The reaſon, we ſay, of theſe ſeveral offices of the Holy Ghoſt ſtill ſubſiſting, upon which he was originally ſent to exerciſe them, we have all the grounds that can be ſuppos'd, to believe, had we no ſpecial promiſe or revelation to that end, that this Holy Spirit is now with us, and will *for ever abide* with us in the exerciſe of them, *to the end of the world.*

Of the CREED.

ARTICLE IX.

The Holy Catholick Church, the Communion of Saints.

CHAP. I.

The Holy Catholick Church.

WE need not enter upon a nice or critical examination concerning the import of the word *holy* in this article. The deſign of our profeſſing to believe, that the church of *Chriſt* is a holy church, implies our belief of it, as a church erected for holy and religious ends, and govern'd by holy laws: Which ends cannot be attain'd, but by a life of ſtrict virtue and piety, in obedience to thoſe laws. This obedience is requir'd of all its members without diſtinction; yet it is viſible they do not all of them actually comply with the terms of it. For whereas *the grace of God hath appear'd unto all men, teaching them, that denying themſelves and all worldly luſts, they ſhould live righteouſly, ſoberly, and godly in this preſent world*; there are confeſſedly great numbers of them who neither practiſe, as they ought, the duties of juſtice, temperance, or piety. The church, however, is here denominated, and it is reaſonable it ſhould be ſo, not from the behaviour of its members contrary to the known and ſtated rules of it, but from the proper and natural effects which it was originally deſign'd to produce. As when we ſpeak of any civil ſociety, we intend that it is incumbent on every one of its members, in the capacity or relation proper to him, to behave himſelf agreeably to the laws of it, by a regular, civil, and inoffenſive conduct; tho' there are great numbers of men, whoſe conduct will not bear to be examin'd by all theſe characters, or perhaps by any of them.

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* *Epheſ.* 3. 16, 17. *Rom.* 8. 26, 27. † *Acts* 20. 28. *Titus* 3. 5. 1 *Cor.* 12. 13.

The main queſtion lies concerning the catholiciſm, or extent of the church of *Chriſt*: As whether all perſons profeſſing themſelves Chriſtians, are entitled to the ſpecial benefits and privileges of it; or only a certain number of them incorporated by certain laws into a diſtinct, regular, and viſible ſociety.

That the church is a diſtinct ſociety, not only excluſive of unbelievers, but of certain perſons profeſſing chriſtianity, is evident from the ſacrament pre-requir'd to their admiſſion into it; without which, it is expreſſly declar'd, that a man cannot *enter into the kingdom of heaven*; whether conſider'd as the kingdom of *Chriſt* here upon earth, or as a future ſtate of happineſs in the eternal fruition of God. It is contrary, indeed, to our notion, and to the practice of any well-eſtabliſh'd ſociety, that a perſon barely by confeſſing himſelf ready to be govern'd by the rules of it, and which conſtitute it ſuch, ſhould thereby be entitled to the privileges of it, without being receiv'd into it according to the forms preſcrib'd to that end.

That the church is a regular ſociety, whoſe members are, or ought to be govern'd, by certain, known, and ſtated rules: I do not only mean in reſpect to a holy life and converſation in general, but ſuch rules as relate to it, conſider'd ſtrictly as a ſociety; Rules of decency, of order, and edification, as evident from thoſe rules, which are, in fact, laid down in the holy ſcriptures to this end. To which we may add, that as the action of God always bears the character of his attributes, and particularly of his wiſdom,

dom, in all his inſtitutions, to ſuppoſe, that he has inſtituted a ſociety, which is not, in the nature of it, a regular ſociety, is to ſuppoſe him, not what he is repreſented in ſcripture, and what he really is, according to the common idea of him, the author of *peace and order*, but *of confuſion* in the holy city, which he has founded.

The reaſons from decency, order, and edification, which prove the church a regular ſociety, prove it, at the ſame time, a viſible ſociety. Except it ſhould be ſaid, contrary to the plain intention of thoſe rules, which were deſign'd to regulate the external behaviour of men, particularly in the worſhip of God, that they relate, notwithſtanding, wholly to what paſſes within their own hearts or conſciences: Which is to render the ſignification of all words uſeleſs, towards expreſſing a diſtinction between ſuch actions as are viſible, and ſuch inward operations of the mind as are inviſible.

If it be allow'd for theſe, or any like reaſons, that the church is a diſtinct, regular, and viſible ſociety; but men ſhould contend that it is, nevertheleſs, a mere voluntary ſociety, which people enter into, or go out of again, at diſcretion, and without the leaſt obligation to any antecedent terms of communion with it, but what they were willing to impoſe upon themſelves; what they may at any time depart from, ſtill reſerving to themſelves a liberty of uniting in any, or occaſionally in every communion of Chriſtians, without diſturbing the peace, or acting contrary to any law of the Chriſtian church in general: This, we ſay again, is a notion of a ſociety, unworthy of the inſtitution of God, and altogether irreconcileable with the character of his wiſdom: A ſociety, which has no example, in any wiſe or well-regulated government in the world; and which, if it could be ſuppos'd to ſubſiſt regularly for any ſhort time, yet would ſoon have a period put to the regularity of it, and run out into the utmoſt confuſion and diſorder. Such a ſociety is alſo contrary to a known fact, and to certain inſtituted means of religion; which either bring men under an obligation to obſerve them, or elſe muſt ſuppoſe a divine poſitive command, which does not oblige men to obedience, by virtue of its being enjoin'd, but only in conſequence of their chuſing to obey it.

These conſiderations may be ſufficient to ſhew in general, that the church is not only a diſtinct, regular, and viſible ſociety, but a ſtated ſociety, in virtue of God's appointment; and that all mankind are not therefore comprehended within the pale of it, nor even all men profeſſing chriſtianity, but thoſe only who enter into it, and continue in it, according to thoſe rules which conſtitute, and are neceſſary to preſerve it, as a ſociety, But becauſe the ſenſe of this article has been much controverted, I ſhall add ſomething more particularly, towards the explication of it *.

THE church of *Chriſt*, in a true and large ſenſe, may take in the whole number of men, who, ſince the fall of the firſt man, have been in covenant with God. How different ſoever the terms of this covenant have been repreſented at different times, all the terms of commerce, in virtue of it, between God and man, were always founded on the mediation of *Chriſt*. His blood did not then firſt atone for the ſins of men, when it flow'd out from his ſacred body upon the croſs; but the expiation of it was as early, as the neceſſity of applying it for the benefit of mankind. *He was the lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world.*

FOR ſeveral ages, his kingdom was principally confin'd to one people. *He ſhew'd his word unto Jacob, his ſtatutes and ordinances unto Iſrael*; but did not *deal ſo with any other nation, neither had the heathen knowledge of his laws.* Yet as the deſign of erecting his kingdom, was to deſtroy the univerſal empire, which the devil had in a manner uſurp'd in the world, and to extend the terms of peace and reconciliation with God to as wide a compaſs as the guilt of *Adam* extended, he did in theſe laſt days perſonally appear both to enlarge the bounds of his dominion, and to propoſe the laſt conditions of life and happineſs to mankind. There is now no regard to the diſtinction, whether of Jew, Greek, or Barbarian. The partition-wall between them is taken away, and God has given his Son the *heathen for his inheritance, the utmoſt parts of the earth for his poſſeſſion.*

THE apoſtles were left by him with commiſſion and full powers to *preach the goſpel to every creature, to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in his name.* The church of *Chriſt* therefore, may in general be ſaid to conſiſt of thoſe perſons, in what nation or kingdom ſoever diſpers'd, who have been initiated into it by baptiſm. But whether the whole body of baptiz'd Chriſtians be a regular ſociety; whether there be in it any neceſſary indiſpenſable rules of order or œconomy; how the perſons in this ſociety ſtand related to one another; whether ſome have authority to preſide, whilſt others are oblig'd to obey; whether the church of *Chriſt* be only a confus'd medley of ſeparate and incoherent parts, like a heap of ſand or of ſtones, that are united together by no common tye or cement, has been much controverted. I ſhall ſhew therefore, that the church is a regular ſociety, the members whereof are united to one another by ſuch bands, and terms of communion, as could have been thought proper to the moſt regular ſociety.

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* I am oblig'd for moſt of the materials, which compoſe the following expoſition of this article, in reſpect to both branches of it, to my very good and ingenious friend Mr. *Law*; who has merited ſo highly by his late excellent and learned vindication of the ſacerdotal office, and of the evangelical inſtitutions in general.

Now that the church is a ſociety ſo united, may be fully prov'd from the characters and repreſentations that are given in the holy ſcriptures concerning it. It is call'd the *kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of Chriſt*. What is the plain and proper ſignification of theſe words? Do not they evidently deſcribe to us a number of people under ſuch rules of life and obedience, as are proper to conſtitute a kingdom? There can be no other reaſon of their being call'd a kingdom, but becauſe the ſtate they are in, is a ſtate of ſuch order, diſcipline, and œconomy, as is neceſſary to the being of a kingdom.

But if the congregation of *Chriſt*'s flock be a looſe, diſunited number of people, that have no dependence on one another; if his church be a ſtate of no order, no diſcipline, or œconomy, then to call it a kingdom, is equally to pervert the natural ſignification of words, as to put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs.

St. *Paul* borrows the following illuſtration from the mutual dependence we have upon one another under *Chriſt* the head. *As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the ſame office; ſo we, being many, are one body in Chriſt, and every one members one of another* *. Again, ſpeaking of *Chriſt*, he ſays, *God gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body* †. Many texts to this purpoſe might be cited from the holy ſcriptures; but theſe are ſufficient to ſhew, what kind of body, or ſociety, the Chriſtian church is. For no one can deny the church, thus deſcrib'd, to be a regular ſociety, but for one of theſe reaſons: Either that the compariſon of it to a natural body, does not at all prove, that it has, in truth, any reſemblance to a body; or if it have, that it may, notwithſtanding, conſiſt of ſeparate and independent members. Either of which abſurdities, tho' neceſſarily following, from the principles of ſome men; yet certainly are too groſs to be directly aſſerted, or maintain'd by them.

The nature of this church, as a regular ſociety, appears farther from the inſtitution of that ſacrament, which the founder of it has appointed, as the means of our entring into it. And as by one ſpirit we are baptis'd into one body ‡; ſo by virtue of that one bread, whereof we in common participate, *we, being many, are one body* **. And can this character belong to us, as perſons wholly independent, or having no viſible or proper communication with one another, as members of the ſame body? Is it the nature and intent of theſe ſacraments, to make us one body under one head, and to entitle us all to the ſame privileges of it, and upon the ſame terms? And are we, nevertheleſs, a ſociety erected on no regular grounds, and ſubſiſting upon no regular laws of communication.

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* *Rom*. 2. 4. † *Epheſ*. 4. 12. ‡ 1 *Cor*. 12. 10. ** 1 *Cor*. 10. 17.

That the church is a regular ſociety, appears farther from the ſcripture account of ſchiſm. We are aſſur'd, that there is ſuch a ſin as ſchiſm; and that it conſiſts in withdrawing our ſelves from the communion of the catholick church, or that part which is eſtabliſh'd where we live upon catholick principles. But now where there is no law, there can be no tranſgreſſion. If we are not oblig'd by any laws or terms of union, our ſeparation would not be, contrary to what the ſcripture ſuppoſes it, a ſin, but an act of pure arbitrary choice; and it would not be any more criminal in us not to communicate with any Chriſtians at preſent, than that we did not communicate with the Chriſtians of the firſt century.

That our Saviour ſent ſome perſons into the world, and with authority to ſend others, by communicating certain powers, wherewith themſelves were inveſted; and that they really did exerciſe this authority, is evident to any one that reads the holy ſcriptures. What the particular diſtinct powers of theſe church-officers were, (which, by the way, too ſuppoſes the church a diſtinct ſociety) will appear in the ſequel. At preſent, I am only to obſerve, that ſome government was authoriz'd by our Saviour, and tranſmitted, according to his inſtitution, by the apoſtles; from whence it will follow, that the congregation of *Chriſt's* people, is a body of men, among whom there are diſtinctions of order, and different degrees of power, that ſome are commiſſion'd for the performance of ſuch and ſuch offices; others oblig'd to certain duties, correſponding to thoſe offices.

That the church is a viſible ſociety, appears from that one branch of church authority, which conſiſts in the power of excommunication. That ſuch a power is lodg'd in the church, is clear from ſeveral expreſs paſſages in ſcripture. *He that heareth not the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen and a publican* *. *A man that is an heretick, after the firſt and ſecond admonition, reject* †. Which rule, plainly ſuppoſes a power in the church, at once, of excommunicating obſtinate hereticks, and of judging what is hereſy. Again, *Now*, ſays the apoſtle St. *Paul* to the

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* *Matt.* 18. 17. † *Tit.* 3. 10.

Corinthians, I have written unto you not to keep company with fornicators *. Nothing can be more plain, than that here is a power; a power originally deriv'd from *Chriſt* and his apoſtles, acting by direction of the Holy Spirit in the church, of excluding ſome notorious and incorrigible offenders out of it. But they cannot exclude ſuch perſons from an inviſible ſociety, therefore the church is viſible: They cannot expel them from a number of people that are independent of one another, therefore the church is a ſociety; for it is impoſſible, in the nature of the thing, that either there ſhould be a member of a ſociety, or that a member ſhould be expell'd out of a ſociety, which is not.

SINCE then there is ſuch a power of expelling certain of its members evidently granted to the church: Since this power cannot be exercis'd but in a viſible manner, and with reſpect to the church, as a viſible ſociety, it follows by undeniable conſequence, that the church is a viſible ſociety, from which men may be viſibly excluded.

THE next thing propos'd to be conſider'd is, what form of government *Chriſt* inſtituted in this ſociety, and by what perſons it was to be ſucceſſively govern'd till his ſecond coming. When he left the world, he communicated the power of governing the church to the apoſtles in theſe words. *As my Father hath ſent me, ſo ſend I you. I appoint to you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed to me a kingdom.* Now if *Chriſt* had authority, becauſe he was ſent by God, and had a kingdom appointed him from God, then his apoſtles had truly an authority from him: Since he declares they were ſent by him, and had a kingdom given them by him, as he was ſent by his Father, and had a kingdom given him from his Father.

THAT there was an authority perſonally veſted in the apoſtles, is evident from theſe, and other texts of holy ſcripture. But it is queſtion'd whether this authority, or any part of it, was to deſcend to after-ages, and in what manner it was to deſcend. This queſtion depending on a matter of fact, it is neceſſary to enquire, in order to come to a reſolution about it, how the apoſtles delegated their authority to others, if, after all, they really did delegate it.

THAT they commiſſion'd perſons to exerciſe particular powers, and to bear rule over others, appears beyond all poſſibility of contradiction from the epiſtles to *Timothy* and *Titus*.

TIMOTHY was ſent to *Epheſus* to ordain elders, and had this authority given him from the apoſtles by impoſition of their hands. From which theſe two things neceſſarily follow; that the apoſtles did communicate ſuch an authority to particular perſons; and that ſuch perſons only, excluſive of others, were veſted with that authority, as they had receiv'd it from the Apoſtles. It is alſo evident, from other powers committed to this Biſhop, that perſons employ'd in the ſervice, or miniſtry of the church, were not all of them equally ordain'd to the ſame powers. For *Timothy* was not only commiſſion'd to ordain elders, and where, it is highly probable, there were ſome elders already; but he was to exerciſe juriſdiction and authority over thoſe elders.

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* 1 *Cor.* 11.

This is a clear argument for the different orders of church-officers, and the different degrees of power to be exercis'd by them. The great queſtion is, whether that order of perſons, who are now call'd Biſhops, be ſuch, as ſuppoſes they have the ſupreme power of juriſdiction in the church, and particularly, the power of ordaining the clergy, from the Apoſtles.

That this power of juriſdiction, and of ordaining the clergy, could belong to none but thoſe, who receiv'd it from the Apoſtles, is as certain, as that the Apoſtles were without any ſuch authority themſelves, till they receiv'd it from *Chriſt*. This power could no more deſcend without their commiſſion, who were originally entruſted with it, than men could originally take it upon themſelves.

There is no neceſſity that we deſcend here to give ſo expreſs an account of the hierarchy eſtabliſh'd in ſcripture, as to ſtate or deſcribe exactly the difference betwixt Biſhops, Prieſts, and Deacons. It is ſufficient to our preſent purpoſe, that it appears from them there are different degrees of power in the evangelical miniſtry, and that even in thoſe times of the extraordinary diſpenſations of God's grace, when almoſt every diſciple was diſtinguiſh'd by one ſpecial gift or other; yet none of them were qualify'd to exerciſe any ſacerdotal power, by virtue of any gifts, but only becauſe they had receiv'd a particular commiſſion to that end. It is only neceſſary for us to deduce from the holy ſcriptures, that there are different degrees of power in the miniſtry, and that ſuch degrees are not owing to any perſonal gifts or endowments, but purely to the authority and extent of their commiſſion.

Nothing is more certain from ſcripture, than that ſome particular perſons only could ordain. This will no more admit of diſpute, than whether *Timothy* was ſent to *Epheſus*, or what was the reaſon of his going thither; which was *to ordain elders*, and is as fully ſpecify'd, as that he was to go thither. Since the ſcriptures therefore teach us, that *Timothy*, by a ſpecial appointment, was ſent to *Epheſus* to ordain elders, it is plain from the ſcriptures, that none can ordain but ſuch as ſucceed *Timothy*, or ſome of his order, in the ſame commiſſion. For as it was the extent of *Timothy*'s commiſſion that qualify'd him to ordain; ſo the ſame extent is neceſſary to all others who pretend to ordain to the ſame functions after him.

There being ſome difficulty in determining this queſtion, on account of the different acceptation wherein the word Biſhop is ſaid to be us'd in the holy ſcriptures, the moſt ſatisfactory way of coming to a reſolution upon it, and to obviate the cavils of prejudic'd men, who yet, if they know any thing of their own principles, are under an equal obligation with us in general to aſſert the divine right of the epiſcopate, in what hands ſoever it be lodg'd; the ſatisfactory way to theſe ends, is to enquire, what hiſtorical authentick evidence we have concerning the diſtinction of the epiſcopal order, as we aſſert it, in oppoſition to that of preſbyters, as aſſerted by thoſe diſſenters, who have been formerly, upon whatever views they are now ſilent in the controverſy, ſome of the moſt ſtrenuous aſſerters of a divine right of ſucceſſion in the clergy, and of the powers peculiar to them.

The queſtion then, as to the fact, is, whether it appear from any authentick monuments of antiquity, that the Apoſtles, and thoſe whom they ordain'd, *Timothy*, for inſtance, and *Titus*, to the order of Biſhops, after they had deſign'd to form churches, really conſtituted a parity of church-miniſters in them, or ordain'd in every church ſome one particular perſon to exerciſe the ſupreme juriſdiction, and with a ſole power of ordaining others to the miniſtry.

Now there ſeems to be no fact in the world better atteſted, which depends on hiſtorical evidence, than that ſince the apoſtolical age there has been in every church ſome one ſingle perſon conſtituted its head and governor, with the ſole power of ordaining the clergy [*], and, I may add, of confirming the laity.

Exact catalogues of theſe Biſhops, according to the order of their ſucceſſion in moſt of the churches, eſpecially of greater note or extent, may be ſeen in the eccleſiaſtical writings of the firſt ages. *Oneſimus*, for inſtance, is declar'd the ſucceſſor of *Timothy* in the church of *Epheſus* [†]. Now if *Timothy* had there ordain'd all the elders to the ſame, or the higheſt degree in the miniſtry, and given them an equal power of juriſdiction, or of ordaining others, with that which was conferr'd on *Oneſimus*, where could be the reaſon or propriety (and the ſame argument holds with reſpect to the epiſcopal ſucceſſion in all other churches) of calling *Oneſimus* alone his ſucceſſor, when they had all, and in every reſpect, the ſame power from *Timothy* with him. Again, *Irenæus* aſſerts, that we are able to produce the names of thoſe who were apointed Biſhops by the Apoſtles in the churches, with the names of their ſucceſſors, down to our own times[*]. But how does this Father ſhew that they had ſuch Biſhops in a ſucceſſive order from the Apoſtles. If all the clergy had been their ſucceſſors, why were not catalogues produc'd, or appeal'd to, of all their names? Would it not have been ſaid, that the clergy, the preſbyters eſpecially, if they had been the higheſt officers, had deriv'd their office and ſucceſſion from the Apoſtles? *Irenæus* would not certainly have referr'd us to one preſbyter, excluſive of all others, as deriving his ſucceſſion from the Apoſtles in any church, if all the preſbyters in it had equally ſucceeded to the ſame office. But this holy Father was ſo far from making the preſbyters in common, or the clergy at large, ſucceſſors to the Apoſtles in the epiſcopate, that he names one particular perſon, peculiarly ordain'd to this office by the Apoſtles themſelves[†]; and ſo proceeds to ſpecify the names of thoſe, who fill'd the chair of this firſt apoſtolical Biſhop, in a ſucceſſive order, to his own times. Which is a plain proof, that, in the ſecond age of the church, there were particular Biſhops, ſo far ſuperior to the order of preſbyters in the church, that they alone were reputed the ſucceſſors of the Apoſtles, and were inveſted, in certain reſpects, with the ſame eccleſiaſtical powers in their age, that the apoſtles themſelves were originally inveſted with. So that if ordinations to the ſacred office had been unlawful, or invalid, either without the authority of the Apoſtles, or in oppoſition to it, they muſt be equally unlawful or invalid, when they are perform'd either without or againſt the authority of their ſucceſſors. For ſince but one perſon, excluſive of the other clergy, is declar'd to be the ſucceſſor of the Apoſtles in any church, tho' in that church there are many preſbyters; it is certain, that ſuch a ſucceſſor of the Apoſtles, is as ſuperior to thoſe preſbyters in eccleſiaſtical authority, as if any Apoſtle, in the ſame capacity, preſiding in it himſelf, would have been. For nothing can properly be meant by a ſucceſſor of the Apoſtles, but one who ſucceeds them in certain apoſtolical powers. It would be needleſs to collect a particular evidence of the point under conſideration from the ancient writers; they all unanimouſly agree in this concluſion, that Biſhops are an order ſuperior to presbyters, to whom the ſupreme power of juriſdiction in the ſeveral churches belong'd, and who had the ſole power of ordaining others; and that they did accordingly in fact ſucceed in the epiſcopate, and alone exerciſe that power.

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[*] Thoſe who will conſult that moſt excellent and learned treatiſe, *The draught of the primitive church*, will find this point eſtabliſh'd after ſo clear and ſolid a manner, as the greateſt adverſaries of the epiſcopate, in the true ſenſe of it, will never be able to gainſay, or reſiſt.

[†] Euſeb. l. 3. c. 4.

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[*] *Habemus annumerare eos, qui ab Apoſtolis inſtituti ſunt Epiſcopi in eccleſiis & ſucceſſores eorum uſque ad nos.*

[†] *Fundantes Apoſtoli eccleſiam Lino, epiſcopatum adminiſtrandæ eccleſiæ tradiderunt.*

What has been ſaid may be ſummarily thus reduc'd. It appears from ſcripture, that there are different degrees in the miniſtry; that all are not Apoſtles, nor elders; that no one can have any degree, but as he receives it ſucceſſively from the apoſtolical hands; that particular perſons, if any regard is to be had to the common conſent of the primitive writers, were declar'd (in contradiſtinction to the reſt of the clergy, whether prieſts or deacons) Biſhops and ſucceſſors of the Apoſtles. This is a full proof, both from ſcripture and antiquity, that ſuch Biſhops are to us, in reſpect to the epiſcopal authority, the ſame that the Apoſtles were to any church in their days. And thoſe who deny the validity of this proof, will find it extremely difficult, if not impoſſible, to produce any proof, which, in their way of reaſoning, will conclude for the divine authority of the ſcriptures themſelves.

The objection againſt what has been ſaid concerning the government of the church, if ſuppos'd only of apoſtolical inſtitution, and admitting that our Saviour himſelf had not inſtituted it, is of no force. In every thing relating to the church, the Apoſtles acted by direction of the Holy Spirit. The promiſe, that *Chriſt* would be with them to the end of the world, not perſonally, but by the miniſtration of the Holy Spirit, muſt be ſuppos'd to have had a particular reſpect to the inſtitutions that were to be made, if not already made, concerning the government of his church. As it is the peculiar and higheſt act of ſovereign power to appoint thoſe ſuperior officers, by whom the government of any ſtate is to be adminiſter'd; on ſuppoſition that the Apoſtles had inſtituted an order of eccleſiaſtical officers, without direction from *Chriſt*, they had uſurp'd an authority in his kingdom, by invading his prerogative, in the moſt tender and incommunicable branch of it. I ſpeak this upon a conceſſion, which there is no neceſſity for us to make, that *Chriſt* did not really inſtitute the epiſcopal order himſelf, according to the ſenſe, wherein we contend for it.

If it be farther pretended, there are very ſtrong preſumptions that a ſucceſſion of the epiſcopal order, whether inſtituted by *Chriſt* or his Apoſtles, has been interrupted; and conſequently whatever powers Biſhops were originally inveſted with, yet Biſhops can have no divine right to the powers which they now claim; we anſwer, it is incumbent on thoſe, who deny there has been a valid ſucceſſion of them (whatever irregularities may poſſibly have happen'd in it) to ſhew how, at what time, or upon what occaſion it was interrupted.

The uninterrupted ſucceſſion of the church of *Rome* is granted by thoſe, who have moſt endeavour'd to explode the notion of it, as groundleſs and unreaſonable, with reſpect to other churches; but which conceſſion does that church more ſervice, than they who object the thing to us would be thought to deſign. And as to our own church in particular, there is all the evidence any matter of fact is capable of, that we derive our ordinations by epiſcopal hands in a ſucceſſive order from the time of the Reformation. As to thoſe who do not derive their ordinations in the ſame authentick manner, they are here out of the queſtion; and when they are call'd upon to give an account by what authority they exerciſe the ſacerdotal powers, or who gave them that authority, muſt be left to anſwer for themſelves, as well as they can. We only contend for the neceſſity of a ſucceſſive impoſition of epiſcopal hands, wherever the ſacerdotal office can be either validly or regularly exercis'd. It is ſufficient to our vindication, that it is ſo tranſmitted and exercis'd in the eſtabliſh'd church of this kingdom; and that we have good grounds to believe, from the very reaſon upon which the Epiſcopate was originally inſtituted, that *Chriſt* would continue a ſucceſſion of it to the end of the world uninterrupted. Thoſe who aſſert that it has been, in fact, interrupted, muſt bring proof, if they are able, for their aſſertion, and not put us upon a proof, as to the claim of a right, whereof we are, and believe our ſelves juſtly, in poſſeſſion.

The principal argument, ſuch a one as it is, why it may be reaſonable to believe, that the ſucceſſion of the epiſcopal order has been interrupted, is taken from the uncertainty of hiſtorical evidence. But this way of arguing, if juſt, will prove more, than they, who on this particular occaſion make uſe of it, will be willing in general to allow. It will follow from it, that we could not have had that full evidence, which we now have, either concerning the truth of any divine revelation, or of the books which compoſe the canon of the holy ſcriptures. Since the external proofs, as to both theſe articles, which are, without doubt, the moſt inconteſtable proofs, wholly depend on hiſtorical evidence. Beſides, it ought to be conſider'd, which was indeed intimated before, that the reaſon of continuing the epiſcopal office ſtill ſubſiſting, upon which it was originally inſtituted, for the better order and government of the church, the reaſon why that office ſhould be continued, ſubſiſts alſo, and will for ever ſubſiſt, till *Chriſt*, who can only repeal his own inſtitutions, has made a declaration to the contrary. But as there are no grounds to believe he ever will repeal them, we ought to obviate any arguments which may be taken from the uncertainty of all human deſigns or events, to conclude that God, where there is occaſion, will rather interpoſe by a ſpecial providence, to preſerve his own inſtitutions, than ſuffer an interruption, eſpecially an entire interruption of them; even on ſuppoſition that *Chriſt* had not made any promiſe to his apoſtles of being *with them* (which, ſince they were mortal, could only be underſtood of his being with them, in ſucceſſively tranſmitting the ſame powers, wherewith they were inveſted, to others) *to the end of the world.*

To argue a thing has certainly happen'd, and that it is abſurd to imagine it has not happen'd, becauſe it might poſſibly, or even very probably happen, is very illogical. But this way of arguing is altogether abſurd, when not only a ſpecial providence from the reaſon of the thing, but a particular promiſe of God is urg'd towards preventing the common irregularities, which things, if left to themſelves, might otherways perhaps, tho' not inevitably have fallen into.

The reaſon why an uninterrupted ſucceſſion is expos'd as abſurd, is from its being ſubject to ſo great uncertainty. And yet thoſe very perſons, who argue after this manner, own an uninterrupted ſucceſſion in the church of *Rome*; upon what particular views, it is not eaſy to determine. If therefore they deny this ſucceſſion in other churches, it cannot be ſo much from any abſurdity in ſuppoſing the truth or poſſibility of the thing in thoſe churches, as out of ſome particular prejudice to the conſtitution of them. But why that ſhould be, in the nature of it, abſurd and impoſſible in one church, which is not ſo in another; why there ſhould be a leſs certain conveyance of a divine inſtitution in a more pure, than confeſſedly in a more corrupt church; why ſo great a diſtinction is ſhewn in favour to the church of *Rome*, and to the diſgrace, the viſible prejudice at leaſt, of the church of *England*; are queſtions, which it only concerns thoſe to anſwer, who have given occaſion for them.

Chap. II.

The Holy Catholick Church, the Communion of Saints.

We have prov'd the church of *Chriſt* to be catholick, as including the whole number of Chriſtians, in what part of the world ſo ever diſpers'd, who believe in *Chriſt*, and obſerve his inſtitutions. We have farther prov'd it, for reaſons which need not here be repeated, to be a diſtinct and regular, a viſible and ſtated ſociety. I ſhall take occaſion, under this head of the *communion of ſaints*, obſerving, at the ſame time, the other ſenſes wherein the words may be explain'd, to ſhew, that the church of *Chriſt* is one ſociety, and upon what foundation the unity of it ſtands.

Now the members of *Chriſt*'s church compoſe one ſociety, and herein the unity of it conſiſts, and is preſerv'd, by their obſerving all thoſe rules and duties, which concern them as a ſociety.

For ſince the church is not a natural or civil, but a religious ſociety; it muſt be the obſervance of certain rules and duties peculiar to it, as ſuch, which unite us as members of it. A ſociety, the nature or conſtitution whereof is wholly owing to the pleaſure of its founder, can only ſubſiſt according to the deſign, and in the full extent of it, by that obedience, which every member pays to ſuch laws, as himſelf has preſcrib'd for the regulation of it.

So that if we know, with reſpect to what rules and duties the church is a ſociety, we may be certain that in the ſame reſpect it is one ſociety; and conſequently to depart from any one rule or duty, which relates to this number of people, and is eſſential to them, as a ſociety, is a breach of that order, wherein the unity of it conſiſts. The church being one, as it is a ſociety, it muſt neceſſarily be one in all thoſe reſpects, which conſtitute a ſociety, and without which it cannot ſubſiſt as ſuch.

This unity which ought to be maintain'd by the ſeveral members of the church, is what, I conceive, may be here principally intended by *the communion of ſaints:* Tho' it may alſo be interpreted to ſignify a mutual communication among Chriſtians of all good and charitable offices. A noble and extraordinary inſtance whereof, we have in the firſt converts to Chriſtianity. When *they were all together, and had all things common;* when *they ſold their* *poſſeſſions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need* *. But the example of thoſe early converts not being, in regard to the particular circumſtances they were under, of general obligation to all ſucceeding Chriſtians, it is not now our duty, nor perhaps ſtrictly lawful for us, on any preſent occaſion, to follow it. The very reaſon upon which St. *Paul* argues for ſuch an equal diſtribution, when he adviſes, that *the abundance of ſome might ſupply the want of others*; *as*, among the *Iſraelites*, *he who had gather'd much, had nothing over*; *and he that had gather'd little, had no lack* †. This very argument, if we conſider the illuſtration of it, ſuppoſes, that, in diſtributing our charity, regard ſhould be had to that particular ſtate or condition of life, wherein we may be; or to any imminent danger of our being otherways depriv'd, and without any benefit to thoſe, who have the neareſt intereſt in us, of what we poſſeſs.

IT may be farther objected, that the original word, which we render *ſaints*, will both in the *Greek* and *Latin*, bear the tranſlation of *holy things*; and ſo may be pretended to ſignify only, that all Chriſtians have, in common, a right to partake in the holy ordinances or inſtitutions of *Chriſt*, tho' without any other obligation upon them to do it, than what flows from their own free and arbitrary choice. But ſince the church of *Chriſt*, as we have obſerv'd already, cannot be an inſtitution worthy of him, if he have preſcrib'd no rules for preſerving the peace and unity of it; or if men are left at liberty to comply with, or tranſgreſs thoſe rules at pleaſure; therefore ſomething more is certainly intended by the communion of ſaints, than our communicating with one another in certain holy rites of religion; ſomething which ſuppoſes not an arbitrary choice to that end, but an antecedent obligation upon us to communicate in them, from the nature of the Chriſtian church, conſider'd as a ſociety inſtituted by *Chriſt*; a ſociety compos'd of a peculiar people, whom he has choſen to himſelf, and who are therefore call'd ſaints, ſeparate from the reſt of the world, and under a diſtinct government, *not unto uncleaneſs*, or the common ſtate of impiety, wherein other men live, but *unto holineſs*.

So that whether we conſider Chriſtians as communicating with one another in any civil offices, or religious rites, the communion of ſaints here mention'd, relating to them, as members of the catholick church, muſt ſuppoſe certain duties more peculiarly incumbent on them, by virtue of that relation, and ſuch as properly ariſe out of it.

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* *Acts* 2. 44, 45.

† 2 *Cor.* 8. 14, 15.

For the like reaſon, whatever communication there may be between *the ſaints that are on earth*, and thoſe departed this life, as members of the inviſible church of *Chriſt*; yet as the article relates to his viſible church in this world, under the government of viſible paſtors, even the ſaints in heaven are ſo far excluded from the communion of ſaints, and in the ſenſe here primarily at leaſt intended. And tho' ſaints are in ſtrictneſs only thoſe, who live up to the holy rules of their profeſſion; yet as perſons are ordinarily denominated, not from a conſequential practice, but from what the nature of their profeſſion obliges them to; therefore by ſaints may be underſtood all perſons in general profeſſing chriſtianity, and baptiz'd into the faith of it. *The kingdom of heaven being like unto a field, wherein the wheat and the tares grow together: Like unto a net caſt into the ſea, which gathers of every kind; Like to a marriage-feaſt*, whereof ſome that participate, *have the wedding-garment, and others not* *. All ſuch perſons, we ſay, living in the unity of the church, and communicating in its ordinances, are, in a large ſenſe, to be look'd upon as here comprehended in the communion of ſaints. In this ſenſe, the people of *Iſrael*, in their moſt corrupt ſtate, might be ſaid to be holy, as being diſtinguiſh'd by the reſt of the world, by God's ſpecial deſignation of them to his more immediate worſhip and ſervice; tho' it muſt not be diſſembled that this branch of the article has a peculiar regard to thoſe, *who are ſanctify'd in Chriſt Jeſus; who are holy in all manner of converſation; careful, in every reſpect, to maintain good works; perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.*

A queſtion here ariſes concerning the obligation of private Chriſtians, with reſpect to the unity of the church, and the obligation of thoſe who are veſted with the ſupreme authority in it, and yet have no direct authority or juriſdiction, by any divine appointment, over one another. So far as the members of particular churches are concern'd in this queſtion; as we have ſhewn they are ſeverally under an epiſcopal government, the unity of them, as the unity of all other ſocieties, muſt conſiſt in their union among themſelves, and eſpecially with their head and governor; to ſeparate from him, to diſobey his orders, to erect any place, or inſtitute any form of worſhip in oppoſition to him, provided he keep within the juſt bounds of his right and authority to govern them, is directly to involve themſelves (if there be any ſuch thing as ſchiſm) in the guilt of ſchiſm, and by as viſible and neceſſary a conſequence, as that perſons living in any diſtinct part or province of a kingdom, when they diſobey the lawful authority of thoſe, who preſide in ſuch a part or province, are chargeable with the guilt of diſobedience to the prince.

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* *Matt.* 13. 24, 30, 47.

There can be no diſpute then concerning the obligation of private Chriſtians, in regard to the unity of the church. But it is not thought ſo eaſy a matter to determine wherein the unity of the church conſiſts, or how it ought to be maintain'd in reference to particular diſtinct churches, eſpecially in different nations and countries, which have no claim of power over one another, nor can ſo much as pretend any, but are only capable of maintaining communion, as members in general of the catholick church.

Towards a reſolution of this point, it may not be improper to obſerve the following particulars.

1. That it is neceſſary the inſtituted order of governors in the church of *Chriſt* ſhould be ſtrictly obſerv'd in every church; otherways the unity of the church in general muſt of neceſſity be broken. For if he who is ordain'd to the ſacerdotal office, and has a right of exerciſing it in one communion, be reputed as a layman in another, ſuch different communions can no more conſtitute one church, or one body of *Chriſt*, than the feet can be the head, or any one member be another member of the ſame body, at the ſame time. It is therefore neceſſary, in the firſt place, towards uniting Chriſtians of particular communions, and making them one church, that they ſhould keep ſtrictly to the one inſtituted form of church-government; and that the clergy, whether of the higheſt, or of a lower order in one church, ſhould be of the ſame order in every church.

2. That the governors of the church, tho' diſtant in place, and independent as to their reſpective juriſdictions, yet ſhould agree in ſuch fundamentals of worſhip and diſcipline, that they may ſafely communicate with one another, ſo often as occaſion ſhall offer. The true union of the church conſiſts in the communion which the members of it ſeverally and reciprocally maintain, not with reſpect to their agreement in this or that particular doctrine, (for in one point or other we all agree with every diſtinction of Chriſtians in the world) but in ſuch things as denominate them a Chriſtian ſociety, and are eſſential to the Chriſtian church under that notion.

3. That the church is a ſociety founded for the performance of certain religious duties, and the obſervance of certain poſitive inſtitutions of God. But theſe duties and inſtitutions being the ſame in all churches, the members of every particular church, and eſpecially thoſe who preſide in it, preſerve the unity of the church in general, by taking the ſame care that they ſhould be every where obſerv'd, and obſerving them not only within their

own diſtricts themſelves, but as they occaſionally communicate with other churches.

The church of *England* is one church, becauſe there are the ſame ſacraments, the ſame government, the ſame clergy, and the ſame terms of communion every where in it. Now the ſame conditions which are neceſſary to conſtitute any national church one particular church, are neceſſary to conſtitute all national churches one catholick church.

The eſſential laws of this church are enacted by *Chriſt* himſelf, in the obſervance of which, all the members, and particularly all the paſtors of it, are oblig'd to unite, and, however diſtant in place, to take care that no occaſional laws, or local rules of diſcipline, which are not neceſſary to this ſociety as ſuch, be ever made a plea for diviſion, or any diſorder in it.

When it is asked then, how Biſhops of different nations are, or ought to be united, we may juſtly anſwer, by their agreement in ſuch things, as make the church of *Chriſt* to be one church, or by their mutual obſervance of ſuch laws and inſtitutions of *Chriſt*, as are neceſſary to the being of his church, conſider'd as one ſociety. They have a right therefore to be receiv'd as Biſhops, and to communicate with every part of the church, however different in mutable rules of diſcipline, ſo long as they adhere to the eſſential inſtituted terms of Chriſtian communion. Again, Biſhops are united to one another, not by any particular epiſcopal powers or contracts, but by ſuch common terms and conditions, as unite the inferior clergy, or the laity to one another; which is nothing but their agreement in practiſing ſuch rules or duties, as conſtitute the church one ſociety.

How are the Biſhops of *London* and *Hereford* united? Not by virtue of any powers merely epiſcopal belonging to them, but by ſuch a mutual agreement in the fundamentals of chriſtian communion, whereby other Chriſtians, whether laity or clergy, are united to one another. And it is only in this reſpect, or by their agreement in ſuch terms of communion, which are neceſſary to the being of a church, as a ſociety, that it is incumbent on the Biſhops of *England* to unite with thoſe of any foreign country.

This was the only unity which was thought neceſſary to be maintain'd in the firſt ages of the church, and when all the methods of correſponding by letters communicatory, pacificatory, commendatory, and ſynodical, imply'd no more, than that perſons in communion with one church, ought to be receiv'd in all other churches: And thoſe who are excluded from the communion of one church, ſhould not be admitted to communicate in any church. This is the proper union that ought to be maintain'd, whether among diſtant churches, or diſtant Biſhops, who can indeed be no otherways one epiſcopate, than as diſtant churches are one, by mutual communion.

As to the particular privileges of ſome Biſhops, whether patriarchal or archiepiſcopal, we ought to have a due regard to them, wherever they obtain or are eſtabliſh'd by preſcription and common conſent. When the Apoſtle argues, *we have no ſuch cuſtom, neither the churches of God*; the tenor of his argument plainly implies, that eccleſiaſtical cuſtoms, whether in particular churches, or of a wider extent, ought, for the ſake of peace and order, to be obſerv'd, provided there be nothing in them inconſiſtent with the fundamentals of Chriſtianity. A reſpect to theſe good and deſirable ends certainly obliges all the members of a national church, not only to live in conſtant communion with it, and occaſionally with any part of it, but to conform to all the innocent rites and ceremonies enjoin'd by a competent authority in it, or which even have been introduc'd by common practice, under the regulation of it I have mention'd. And the reaſons reſpecting peace and order of our conforming to the innocent rites and cuſtoms of particular churches, whereof we are members, being the ſame, if not in ſome reſpect ſtronger, for our conforming to the general rules and practice which every where obtain in the catholick church; they ought at leaſt to have the ſame force towards obliging us to a compliance with them. This does not hinder but that private churches may have certain different rites and ceremonies, to which other churches are not oblig'd to conform; every national church, according to the twentieth article of our own church, having *a power to decree rites and ceremonies; provided it ordain nothing contrary to God's word.*

BUT I only mention theſe things incidentally; it is the duty of communicating with the catholick church, and with every ſound part of it, in all thoſe rules and inſtitutions that conſtitute it a ſociety, and are neceſſary to preſerve it as ſuch, which it is my principal intention to recommend and enforce. For men to imagine the church of *Chriſt* a wiſe inſtitution, towards promoting the great ends of unity, peace, and order, and yet at the ſame time to inſinuate that there is no regular or ſtated government in it, but that all Chriſtians are at liberty to be of any communion, or of all communions, is a notion ſo far from agreeing with the characters of the chriſtian church in ſcripture, as it is repreſented, by a *houſe*, a *flock*, a *temple*, a *building*, a *building of living ſtones*, (a metaphor which can only have an intelligible ſenſe, as it ſuppoſes a vital and regular communication between the members of this ſociety)

ſociety, the nature whereof it is deſign'd to illuſtrate;) ſo far, we ſay, would the church of *Chriſt* be, on the foregoing ſuppoſition, ſuch a ſociety as is here repreſented, that it would be one of the moſt confus'd and irregular ſocieties, if, after all, it could, in any reaſonable ſenſe, be term'd a ſociety, upon the face of the whole earth; ſo far from being, what it is repreſented in another place, *a city which is at unity with itſelf*, that to have call'd it a *Babel*, would have given us an idea much better correſponding to the nature and conſtitution of it. I am ſenſible many volumes have been written upon this ſubject, and that many warm conteſts have happen'd on occaſion of controverting it; all which might, in my humble opinion, have been prevented, if men had ſeriouſly, or in the ſincerity of their hearts, put this one queſtion to themſelves, whether God be really *a God of order, or of confuſion, in all the churches of the ſaints?*

These reflections are ſufficient to ſhew in general, what the reciprocal duties are of Biſhops in the ſame, or in different nations; what powers they have, either jointly, or ſeparately; and how they are to act in both capacities, towards the maintenance and preſervation of that unity, which conſtitutes the chriſtian church one ſociety.

But, becauſe it is of ſo great conſequence to us, that our notions concerning this matter ſhould be as clear and diſtinct as poſſible, I ſhall here take occaſion to make two or three obſervations upon what has been ſaid, which may ſtill be of farther uſe to that end. And,

1. It follows, from the principles already laid down, that the catholick church is not diſtinguiſh'd, or to be known as ſuch, by numbers. For as it is conſtituted a ſociety by reaſon of certain poſitive inſtitutions, and ſocial duties, wherever thoſe inſtitutions are obſerv'd, or thoſe duties practis'd, there is the church, whether its members are few or many in number.

2. That no moral virtues, no internal graces or qualities of the mind, can of themſelves, or without regard to thoſe duties, which properly relate to the church, as a ſociety, preſerve the unity of the church. So that devotion, charity, humility, or any other chriſtian virtue, tho' abſolutely neceſſary to the ſalvation of Chriſtians, yet are not the infallible marks of church-memberſhip. The church being a viſible ſociety, the unity of it muſt be preſerv'd by the obſervance of its external viſible inſtitutions.

3. That neither is a ſtrict agreement in the ſame articles of faith ſufficient to preſerve the unity of the church. For as faith may be conſider'd, in relation to Chriſtians, rather as an independent ſect, than a regulated ſociety; ſo the unity of faith may be

preſerv'd among Chriſtians, at the ſame time the unity of the chriſtian church, as a ſociety, may be deſtroy'd. If therefore, as we have now, I hope, a right to take for granted, the church is one viſible ſociety, it is out of queſtion, that an agreement in faith alone is not ſufficient to keep up the unity of it, as that one viſible ſociety; ſeeing the moſt diſtant and divided ſocieties, and even ſuch as are inviſible, may yet agree in aſſenting to the ſame articles of faith. This, we acknowledge, was the caſe of thoſe old ſchiſmaticks, the *Novatians*, and *Donatiſts*. They profeſs'd the ſame fundamental articles of faith, which the catholicks profeſs'd, but were, notwithſtanding, out of the communion of the chriſtian church, as having openly violated thoſe laws which conſtitute it a church *.

4. THAT charity, as it denotes tenderneſs and compaſſion towards perſons of a different communion, is not that principle wherein the unity of the church properly conſiſts. For as it is a ſociety founded in relation to certain poſitive ſocial duties, a general good-will towards people of all communions, can no more make them one ſociety, than our praying for the converſion of Jews or Mahometans makes us one ſociety with both, or either of them.

5. SINCE the church is one, as it is a ſociety, a unity of government is certainly neceſſary to it. Government being eſſential to ſociety, the conſequence is undeniable, that it is as neceſſary Chriſtians ſhould be united under one form of government, as that they ſhould be members of one ſociety. This is what St. *Cyprian* intends, when he ſays, *the epiſcopate is one, tho' ſhar'd by ſeveral perſons in the exerciſe of it* †.

I have principally conſider'd this branch of the article, *the communion of ſaints*, in reference to the unity of the church, as a viſible and regular ſociety, erected for holy and religious ends: Tho' I would not be thought wholly to exclude that other ſenſe, wherein it is ordinarily explain'd, with reſpect to the communication which there is, or may be, between the inviſible members of *Chriſt*'s church, and, as importing either any entercourſe which we now have with the ſaints departed this life, or which thoſe ſaints have with one another in heaven. According to this ſenſe, the members of *Chriſt*, however at preſent divided, or plac'd in a different ſtate or condition of life, yet may be properly ſaid to maintain communion, as members of one ſociety.

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* *Nobiſcum eſtis (Donatiſtæ) in baptiſmo, in ſymbolo, in cæteris dominicis ſacramentis; in ſpiritu autem unitatis & vinculo pacis, in ipſâ denique catholicâ eccleſiâ nobiſcum non eſtis.* Auguſt.

† *Epiſcopatus eſt unus, cujus à ſingulis in ſolidum pars tenetur.* Cyp. de unit. eccleſ.

EVEN the holy angels, who are now employ'd in building up the ſpiritual temple of *Chriſt*, in miniſtring to thoſe who ſhall be heirs of ſalvation, and who have the name of ſaints apply'd in the holy ſcriptures in common to them *, were very probably deſign'd, by the compilers of the creed, to be comprehended in this confeſſion of our faith, *the communion of ſaints*. If it be not true, that they are united to *Chriſt*, not only as *Lord*, in general, *of all things*, and as *head over all things, above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is nam'd both in this world, and in that which is to come*; but by virtue of their partaking after ſome ſome ſpecial manner in the ſalutary effects of his grace; not of his pardoning grace, as they had never ſinn'd, there could be no occaſion of applying that to them; but of ſuch a meaſure of his preventing, or ſanctifying grace, as might more effectually tend to confirm them in that ſtate of favour with God, wherein they were originally created, and had, when ſo great a number of other angels revolted, faithfully preſerv'd themſelves.

WHATEVER ground there may be for this latter ſuppoſition, we may properly be ſaid to have communion with the ſaints, whether denoting the ſpirits of holy men departed this life, or the holy angels, as we here partake with them in the ſame acts of homage, of praiſe and adoration to the Lord *Chriſt*, and ſhall hereafter enjoy, in common with them, the happineſs of heaven to all eternity. On both which accounts, we are repreſented, as already free denizons of the new *Jeruſalem*; as being *come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God; and an innumerable company of angels, to the general aſſembly, and church of the firſt-born, which are written in heaven; and to God, the judge of all; and to the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect; and to Jeſus, the mediator of the new covenant* †.

THERE is no ground then, in the reaſon of the thing, to ſuppoſe, and ſuch a ſuppoſition is plainly repugnant to the expreſs authority of ſcripture, that death diſſolves the union, which was between the faithful in this life. This union being conſtituted by their relation to one another, as members of the church under *Chriſt* the head, the ſame reaſon for the continuance of it ſtill ſubſiſts, whether they live or die; except, what will not be pretended, when good men ceaſe to live, they ceaſe to have any farther relation to *Chriſt*, as head of his church, or to have the ſame common intereſt, with the reſt of his members, in *the fellowſhip of*

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* Μετὰ πάντων τῶν ἁγίων αὐτοῦ, 1 *Theſſ*. 3. 13. Πάντες οἱ ἅγιοι ἄγγελοι, *Matt*. 25. 31. Ἐνώπιον τῶν ἁγίων ἀγγέλων, *Rev*. 14. 10. Ὑπὸ ἀγγέλου ἁγίου, *Acts* 10. 23.

† *Heb*. 12. 22, 23.

the Holy Ghoſt. So that all the difference, as to the communion which the ſaints maintain with one another here, and which they maintain with thoſe departed this life, is, that we at preſent communicate with them, after a manner both viſible and inviſible, and when they are paſs'd into another ſtate, after a manner inviſible only.

Of the CREED.

Article X.

The Forgiveneſs of Sins.

WE profeſs, and can only profeſs, our belief of this article, as *Chriſtians*. For, whatever hopes men could entertain from the goodneſs and benignity of the divine nature, that, upon the repentance of ſinners, God might be inclin'd to pardon their ſins, yet it will appear from the ſequel, they could have no ſuch aſſurance of his pardoning grace, upon that condition, as to make it, without a ſpecial revelation to that end, an article of their faith.

For the more full and diſtinct explication of theſe words, I ſhall proceed according to the following method.

I. I ſhall enquire what we are to underſtand by the forgiveneſs of ſins.

II. Whether the doctrine concerning the forgiveneſs of ſins be a doctrine peculiar to Chriſtians.

III. Whether any conditions, beſides thoſe of faith and repentance, be pre-requir'd in any caſe to the forgiveneſs of ſins.

I. What we are to underſtand by the forgiveneſs of ſins. I need not obſerve that ſin, which is a tranſgreſſion of the law, renders men, in the nature of it, liable to puniſhment. For wherever there is authority to enact any law, there muſt be authority in the legiſlator to give a penal ſanction to it, and to puniſh thoſe who contemn or diſobey it; otherways it would be impoſſible for any government long to ſubſiſt, or maintain its authority. So that the ſame arguments which prove the neceſſity or reaſons of government, prove it is reaſonable and neceſſary, that he who governs, ſhould be inveſted with a power of puniſhing delinquents.

In order therefore to the forgiveneſs or remiſſion of any crime, the criminal is to be acquitted by the legiſlator from all obligation to puniſhment. This is the loweſt ſenſe that forgiveneſs of ſins is capable of, and which is agreeable, not only to the ſenſe of the holy ſcriptures in the Old and New Teſtament, but to the common notions of mankind. To this end expiatory ſacrifices were appointed by the ſpecial command of God; and *Chriſt*, to whoſe perfect ſacrifice the efficacy of them all was referr'd, and wherein the power they had to abſolve ſinners from puniſhment alone terminated, is ſaid to have *redeem'd us with his blood*; to have *been made a curſe for us*; to have *been wounded for our tranſgreſſions, and bruis'd for our iniquities*; to have *born our griefs, and carry'd our ſorrows.* All which ſacrificatory expreſſions, as in the nature of them they antecedently ſuppoſe the ſinner's obligation to puniſhment; ſo they evidently import, in conſequence of the expiation made for them, that they are, from that time, abſolv'd from all ſuch obligation.

There can be no diſpute as to this acceptance of the words: But the ſcripture notion concerning the forgiveneſs of ſins, and eſpecially in the New Teſtament, implies ſomething more. God, in conſideration of the death and obedience of *Chriſt*, is there repreſented, not only as being graciouſly pleas'd to remit the puniſhment due, and expreſſly threaten'd to ſinners, but to re-inſtate them in his favour, and even to put them in a capacity of a far greater happineſs, than that for which they appear to have been originally created. He is ſaid to have *reconcil'd us to himſelf by Jeſus Chriſt**: That is, to conſider us, who were before in a ſtate of enmity, and objects of his diſpleaſure, as being now with him, not only upon terms of pardon, but of favour. So this apoſtle argues in another place; *When we were enemies, we were reconcil'd to God by the death of his Son.* In virtue of which reconciliation, heaven being promis'd, they, whoſe ſins, according to the tenor of the new covenant, are forgiven, if they die in that ſtate, are entitled to the promiſe of eternal life. This effect of our reconciliation to God, if it could not be inferr'd from the natural

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* 2 *Cor.* 5. 18.

tural force of the words, is evident from many expreſs declarations in holy ſcripture, particularly from that eminent one of our bleſſed Lord himſelf; *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life*[*]. This, without entring upon a nice and critical examination concerning the meaning of forgiveneſs of ſins, or the different acceptations of it, as expreſs'd in the original[†], may ſerve, in general, to ſhew, what the evangelical notion, as to this phraſe, is; and how, as Chriſtians, we are eſpecially intereſted in the preſent article. But this leads me to conſider more diſtinctly, in the next place,

II. Whether the doctrine concerning remiſſion of ſins be peculiar to Chriſtians. As a doctrine of whoſe truth we can have any firm or ſettled perſuaſion, we anſwer, it is peculiar to them. Pardon of ſin being an act of mere grace and favour, it cannot be certainly known, whether God will pardon the ſinner, till he has declar'd his pleaſure to that end; and if his promiſe of pardon be not abſolute, which would not conſiſt with his wiſdom, or the ends of government, (if it might poſſibly with his juſtice) till he has declar'd the conditions of it. This promiſe is ſignify'd in very expreſs terms in the New Teſtament. Our Lord himſelf declares, *that remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preach'd in his name*[‡]. His apoſtles declare to the ſame effect, that *through him is preach'd unto us the forgiveneſs of ſins*[**]; that *in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveneſs of ſins, according to the riches of his grace*[††]. The conditions upon which we ſhall be forgiven, are ſpecify'd in terms no leſs clear and diſtinct; *God hath ſet him forth to be a propitiation, through faith, in his blood, to declare his righteouſneſs, for the remiſſion of ſins, which are paſs'd*[‡‡]. *By him all that believe are juſtify'd*[*]. *Except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh*[†]. *Repent, and be converted, that your ſins may be blotted out*[‡]. Repentance therefore was to be preach'd at the ſame time, and as a neceſſary previous condition of it, with *remiſſion of ſins*[**]. Theſe declarations limit the remiſſion of ſins, ſo far as it is a doctrine founded in the divine promiſe to penitent ſinners. What men therefore, living up, ſo far as they are able, to the principles of natural religion, and upon any failure in their duty, being heartily penitent, may do towards recommending themſelves to the pardoning grace of God; or whether the benefits of *Chriſt's* death may not, by ſome ſecret determination of the divine will, extend to them; are queſtions wherein, as we have no immediate or ſpecial intereſt, neither can we come to any certain reſolution about them.

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[*] *John* 3. 16.

[†] Ἄφεσις ἁμαρτιῶν.

[‡] *Luke* 24. 47.

[**] *Acts* 13. 38.

[††] *Epheſ.* 1. 7.

[‡‡] *Rom.* 3. 28.

[*] *Acts* 13. 30.

[†] *Luke* 13. 3.

[‡] *Acts* 3. 17.

[**] *Luke* 24: 47.

But whatever the caſe may be, as to the ſtate of the heathen world, all men muſt acknowledge, there is a mighty difference between an article of ſaith, and any concluſion drawn, at the beſt, from a mere probable conjecture; between a fœderal right to a promiſe, and an arbitrary uncovenanted act of divine grace.

This conſideration might, one would think, be of itſelf ſufficient to put to ſilence the ignorance of thoſe fooliſh men, who think, that even on ſuppoſition the truth of chriſtianity could be clearly made out, yet it is not neceſſary for them, provided they do but endeavour to lead, what they call good moral lives, to put themſelves to the trouble of examining, in a ſerious and diſtinct manner, the proofs upon which we demonſtrate it to be true; or if they do, and are fully convinc'd by thoſe proofs, that they ſhould conform themſelves to the poſitive inſtitutions of it. As if it were not equally a law flowing from the principles of natural religion or morality, and as obligatory, in the reaſon of the thing, that we ſhould aſſent to any truth God might think fit to reveal, or obey any poſitive command it might be his pleaſure to enjoin, as that we ſhould practiſe any duty, tho', in the nature of it, antecedently incumbent on us; or as if God had not indifferently a power of puniſhing our contempt of his laws and authority in both caſes.

So obvious a reflection, and the reaſon of which is ſo evident from thoſe words of our Saviour, ſpeaking of unbelievers, to whom the proper means of conviction were propos'd, *this is their condemnation, that light is come into the world*, does really render it unaccountable, that men capable of reaſoning, and of being reaſon'd with in other caſes, after all the remonſtrances made to them concerning the danger, whether of infidelity in general, or of their rejecting any particular doctrines or inſtitutions of the goſpel, ſhould yet think it matter of ſo great indifference, whether they withhold their aſſent in any, or in all theſe reſpects.

But let us ſuppoſe men could have any rational aſſurance that God, upon their repentance, will ſo far pardon their ſins, as to remit the puniſhment due to them, (which is all the deiſts can pretend to hope, and more than any deiſt will ever be able to prove) yet the forgiveneſs of ſins, as taught in the goſpel, and importing ſuch a reconciliation to God, that he will not only abſolve penitent ſinners from puniſhment, but receive them to favour, and crown them with everlaſting glory and happineſs; this muſt be allow'd, at leaſt, a doctrine peculiar to the chriſtian religion,

ligion, and which muſt inevitably leave thoſe who neglect ſo great ſalvation, under circumſtances, that will render it ſtill more difficult for them to eſcape. With a ſpecial regard to this promiſe of eternal life, the apoſtle St. *Paul* triumphs in recognizing the power, and peculiar excellency of the chriſtian diſpenſation. *This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all men to be receiv'd, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world,* not merely to pardon, but, *to ſave ſinners.*

III. Whether any conditions, beſides thoſe of faith and repentance, be pre-requir'd to the forgiveneſs of ſins. It will not be deny'd, that God may convey his pardoning grace to ſinners, upon what conditions, or by what means he pleaſes, and that his promiſes are always to be underſtood according to his own method of applying them. If therefore it appear, that, beſides the general conditions of faith and repentance, in order to the pardon of ſin, there be any divine inſtitutions of God proper to apply or aſcertain his pardoning grace; when adminiſter'd by perſons duly authoriz'd, and to perſons duly qualify'd, then ſuch inſtitutions are as neceſſary to the forgiveneſs of ſin, (I mean where they can and ought to be adminiſter'd) as faith and repentance in general. This, I conceive, will not be diſputed, with reſpect to the two ſacraments. But it has been much controverted, whether our Saviour, having left a power to his church of remitting and retaining ſins, a formal declaratory ſentence of the church, is not, in certain caſes, neceſſary to thoſe ends.

This power of the church may be conſider'd, in reſpect to it, under the notion of a ſociety, or to the ſacerdotal office, exercis'd by particular members of it.

The church being a regular and viſible ſociety, the nature of it, as ſuch, ſuppoſes there ought to be an inherent power lodg'd in it of receiving or retaining perſons who are willing to conform to the rules of it, and of excluding other vicious and corrupt members, who openly tranſgreſs thoſe rules; eſpecially if they endeavour to ſubvert or deſtroy the fundamental rights, without which, as a ſociety, the church cannot poſſibly ſubſiſt. This, we ſay, admitting the founder of the chriſtian church had any wiſe end in inſtituting it, or that it is not a ſociety of the moſt precarious and irregular conſtruction of any ſociety in the whole world, ſeems to be a neceſſary and undeniable conſequence. And this power of the church, as to the excluſion of notorious delinquents from the communion of it, is the power of what we call *excommunication.*

But, beſides the natural reaſon of the thing, to ſhew that the church, as a ſociety, ought to be veſted with ſuch a power, we have an authentick evidence, from the words of our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, that, in fact, the church is inveſted with it. On occaſion of any offence done to a private perſon, our Saviour directs him to expoſtulate the matter with the offending party, and with him alone; and, if he will not hearken to any reaſonable demands of ſatisfaction, then to bring the caſe before two or three witneſſes, and if they cannot adjuſt the difference, to tell it in the laſt iſſue to the church. If the offender neglect to hear, or has no regard to the determination of the church, then he is to be conſider'd *as a heathen or a publican* *, a perſon excluded from the communion and privileges of it. And that the church has a power of excluding ſuch a perſon, is as evident as words can make any thing, from the declaration of our Lord immediately following, and introduc'd with a form of ſpeech denoting a more ſolemn aſſeveration of what he intends. *Verily I ſay unto you, whatſoever ye ſhall bind on earth, ſhall be bound in heaven; and whatſoever ye ſhall looſe on earth, ſhall be looſed in heaven* †. It muſt be acknowledg'd, our Saviour did not here preſcribe a new method of reconciling penitent offenders, or puniſhing the obſtinate. He had regard to the diſcipline and practice of the jewiſh aſſemblies, and did not decline, corrupt as they were in ſome of their inſtitutions, to follow the model of what was good and well-founded in them. How happy would it be for the chriſtian church; how many occaſions of diſſenſion, and even of open ſchiſm among chriſtians might be prevented, if they, who profeſs themſelves ſo, had the ſame ſpirit of *Chriſt*, or would conduct themſelves by the ſame rule.

As our Saviour committed ſuch a power to his church, ſo ſhe had not only a right of executing it, but was even repreſented as unfaithful to her truſt for neglecting, when there was a proper opportunity to put it in execution. We have the authority of St. *Paul* to ſupport what is here ſaid. He reproves the *Corinthians* for not excommunicating, in his abſence, a perſon, who had been guilty of a very ſcandalous practice among them ‡. And then, to repair that omiſſion, he proceeds expreſſly to charge them, that *they deliver ſuch one unto Satan* **. It is not neceſſary that we ſhould here enquire what the determinate ſenſe of this phraſe is, or whether it imported a power peculiar to the church at that time; it is ſufficient to our purpoſe, that the church of *Corinth*, as appears from the charge given to them in the clauſe of the chapter, had a power of *putting away from among themſelves that wicked perſon* *.

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* *Matt.* 18. 15, 16. † ℣. 19.
1 *Cor.* 5. 1, 2. ** ℣. 5.

However, if any good argument can poſſibly be drawn from the nature of the thing to ſhew, that the church cannot have ſuch a power, we ought to ſubmit to the force of it, and to interpret thoſe paſſages of ſcripture, upon which it appears to be ſo expreſſly founded, in a different ſenſe from that, according to which we explain'd them. Words, the ſenſe whereof is more arbitrary, or which may be ſuppos'd to bear an equivalent ſignification, muſt always give place to the known and immutable reaſon of things.

Now it is pretended, that the church cannot have a power of remitting or retaining ſins, becauſe ſhe does not know the true ſtate which perſons are in, upon whom ſhe is ſaid to exerciſe that power. This objection, we allow, would be unanſwerable, if the church aſſum'd an abſolute independent power of remitting or retaining ſins; but as it is here put, no body is diſtreſs'd, or in the leaſt affected with it.

When we ſay, that the church can remit or retain ſins, we mean no more, than that God, who may employ what inſtruments he pleaſes in executing his will, makes uſe of the ſentence pronounc'd by the church to that end, as a means of his retaining or remitting them. Thus, when it is ſaid, *baptiſm ſaves us*, we do not intend that it does ſo abſolutely, or by any natural efficiency, but only in virtue of God's inſtitution, and according to the terms whereunto the ſalutary power of it is annex'd: For otherways it would, without diſtinction, have the ſame effect on all baptiz'd perſons whatever.

Tho' the church cannot infallibly judge concerning the ſpiritual ſtate of her members, we ſay, nevertheleſs, her cenſures or abſolutions are authoritative, becauſe God, when they are truly apply'd, ratifies and confirms them; when they are miſapply'd, they have no manner of operation in reſpect to the perſons they are apply'd to, but leave them in the ſame ſtate and condition, as to the favour of God, wherein they were before.

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* The excellent author of *The cauſes of the preſent corruption of chriſtians*, on occaſion of his having cited a great part of this chapter, and referr'd to the reſt, in proof of that right, with which the church is inveſted, of exerciſing diſcipline, and excommunicating publick offenders, has this pertinent and judicious reflection. "I deſire the
" force of this proof may be conſider'd. It is not one ſingle paſſage which I here pro-
" duce, it is a whole chapter, it is a thread of arguments, and of expreſs and reiterated
" injunctions. St. *Paul* deſcribes thoſe whom the church ought not to ſuffer in her bo-
" ſom; he appoints what is to be done in reference to them; which is, that they
" ought to be cut off from the body of Chriſtians, and that their company is to be
" avoided. *He concludes*, " There cannot be a clear and expreſs law, if this is not ſo.

To ſay therefore the church aſſumes a power of damning or ſaving men, of opening the kingdom of heaven to them, or excluding them out of it at pleaſure, is not to argue againſt any power which the church really claims, but to bring a reproach upon her, by occaſion of a very unjuſt and moſt groundleſs charge.

Neither, indeed, is it of any conſequence to the pardon of a ſinner, whether it be declar'd by a fallible, or an infallible perſon, provided God ratifies the ſentence, or in order to qualify ſuch a ſinner for his pardoning mercy, has, by any poſitive act of his will, render'd ſuch a previous ſentence neceſſary.

When the church then abſolves or cenſures any ſinner, there is a ſecret condition always imply'd of her making a right judgment; or, if ſhe happen to be miſtaken in her ſentence, neither her cenſures nor abſolutions are pretended to have any ſpiritual effects. But becauſe a power may be ſometimes miſapply'd, in the exerciſe of it, by the church, has the church therefore no ſuch power in any caſe? It might as juſtly be argued, that the ſacraments ought not to be adminiſter'd, becauſe we do not infallibly know the qualifications of thoſe who are to receive them; or that they are not means of grace to ſome perſons, becauſe they do not in fact or eventually prove ſo to all perſons.

They who aſſert the ſentence of the church is purely declaratory, indifferently entitle every member of the church to the ſame power. That God will forgive a ſinner upon his ſincere repentance, is a truth of equal evidence and certainty, whoever declares it. Were this all that our Saviour intended by his granting a power to the church of remitting or retaining ſins, he had only granted them a power as a body, which every member had ſeparately in himſelf before. But where could be either the wiſdom or favour of a grant, without any ſpecial privilege annex'd to it. On this ſuppoſition, there does not appear to be the leaſt grounds for our Saviour's referring the offending party, in the laſt reſort, to the ſentence of the church; ſeeing the deciſion of the party offended would alone have had the ſame effect, as to all intents and purpoſes, with the judgment of the whole church; ſo far as concern'd what falls here properly under our conſideration, the ſpiritual ſtate of that offender, and in regard to which the grant of our Lord concerning this power of the church, to remit or retain ſins, can only admit of a reaſonable explication.

Where then can be the ingenuity of men, in objecting to the church the claim of a power, which ſhe is known expreſſly to diſclaim. The church of *England*, particularly, in all her abſolutions, ſuppoſes a condition imply'd of true repentance in the party abſolv'd. And that if ſhe err in pronouncing any judicial ſentence, her error can be of no effect either in favour, or to the prejudice of the perſon upon whom it is pronounc'd. So far is ſhe from making the ſalvation of men to depend upon her arbitrary will or deciſions, that all her ſentences, relating to the favour or diſpleaſure of God, are conditional. But when the condition is obſerv'd, tho' known only to God, they are not for that reaſon leſs authentick; for, notwithſtanding, *the judgment is God's*; becauſe ſo far ſhe acts in his name, by a power deriv'd from him, and according to his will. *He* therefore *who deſpiſes* that power, *deſpiſes not man, but God.*

THEY who acknowledge the apoſtles of *Chriſt* had this power committed to them, but pretend, it does not therefore follow that their ſucceſſors (I ſpeak of them here as a collective body) in the ſacred office, or the clergy at preſent, have any claim to ſuch power, have, in this reſpect, a much greater appearance of reaſon on their ſide, than perſons, who argue againſt the natural poſſibility of the thing; as they give an intelligible account, at leaſt, of our Saviour's declaration, when he originally committed that power to the apoſtles. But then they can by no means prove that it was not to be tranſmitted to thoſe, who were to ſucceed the apoſtles in the adminiſtration of the church, *to the end of the world.* If this power, as is now confeſs'd, was given to the church in its infancy, in a ſtate of its greateſt purity, for the better order and government of it, certainly the reaſons for the continuance of this power, inſtead of ceaſing, in ſucceſſive and more corrupt ages of the church, ſhould rather grow proportionably ſtronger.

THE ſum of what has been ſaid, is, that God has given authority to the church to bind and looſe ſinners; this authority is exercis'd by her declaring ſinners, under different circumſtances, to be bound or looſed. If this declaration be ill founded, it is their own who make it, and not God's; who is not therefore oblig'd to confirm it, any more than he is oblig'd to confer grace, by means of the bread and wine in the holy ſacrament, conſider'd as bread and wine; tho', conſider'd as his own inſtitution, he will confer that grace, by means of them, to perſons duly qualify'd, which he would not otherways confer. For the like reaſon, the declarations of the church, whether with reſpect to delinquents or to the penitent, when well founded, are efficacious, tho' pronounc'd by fallible men, becauſe they are, notwithſtanding, the declarations of men, acting by virtue of God's inſtitution, and, in this caſe, after a manner perfectly agreeable to the end and deſign of it.

I have hitherto principally conſider'd the power of the keys, as proper to the church, under the notion of a ſociety, and as ſhe is actually inveſted with that power by a poſitive grant from *Chriſt*.

But there are ſome who contend farther, that the power of abſolving ſinners (for with reſpect to that point the main controverſy lies, and which I ſhall therefore confine my ſelf to) was not only given to the church in general, as a ſociety, but to every particular prieſt of it, upon ſuch evidence as ſinners, in common and ordinary caſes, might give of their true repentance; eſpecially on occaſion of their confeſſing the ſins they had been guilty of in a more diſtinct and particular manner. Yet they do not argue, from the nature of confeſſion itſelf, that it is requiſite the confeſſor ſhould have a power formally of abſolving a penitent; for then, as Chriſtians are in general exhorted to *confeſs their ſins one to another* *, every Chriſtian would have the ſame power; yet a ſpecial commiſſion being given by our Lord to *Peter* of *binding and looſing* ſinners, not by the acknowledgment of thoſe againſt whom this argument is brought, as head of the church, but as a private paſtor, and in common to the reſt of the apoſtles; and confeſſion of ſin being a proper mark of that repentance, which is neceſſary towards the abſolution of a ſinner; it is ask'd, if, upon his confeſſion, the prieſt has not a power of abſolving ſuch a ſinner, to what end was the grant of it made to him in the perſon of *Peter*; or upon what other occaſion can he ſo conveniently be ſuppos'd to exerciſe it?

IN anſwer to this, it may be ſaid, that the power here given to *Peter*, and the reſt of the apoſtles, was temporary, and expir'd with them. But this is only ſaying what can never be prov'd. It is more reaſonable to conclude, that this power being given to *Peter*, as a power proper to the ſacerdotal office, the reaſon why it ſhould be continued in the paſtors of the church, will hold good, ſo long as that office itſelf ſhall continue.

WHAT is here advanc'd would probably meet with much leſs oppoſition, were it not for a conſequence, which is pretended to follow too naturally from it; that if *Chriſt* have given *Peter*, and in him the whole order of the prieſthood, a power of looſing ſinners, particularly upon the confeſſion which they make of their ſins, then every ſinner is oblig'd, to the end he may be abſolv'd, to confeſs his ſins to the prieſt.

HERE we muſt diſtinguiſh between ſuch duties, as are of abſolute and ſtanding obligation, and ſuch as are only to be conſider'd, under certain circumſtances, as matter of expedience. It may be proper to confeſs our ſins for the quiet and relief of our own minds, or for the removal of any doubt or ſcruple, to a perſon capable of directing us, and eſpecially to our ſpiritual guide, to whom the direction of our conſciences is more immediately committed. But the ſcriptures have no where made this a duty neceſſarily incumbent on us. Repentance, indeed, is abſolutely requir'd in order to the remiſſion of ſins, which we are to teſtify the ſincerity of, by all the ſigns of a true and hearty contrition, before the prieſt can, or ought to abſolve us. But a particular confeſſion of our ſins, with the ſeveral circumſtances of them, is no where expreſſly requir'd. It may be, in ſome caſes, and to ſome perſons, an act of piety, or prudence, to make ſuch a confeſſion: And dying penitents, under any great conflicts of mind, are particularly exhorted, and ſuppos'd by our own church to do it. But ſtill *Chriſt* not having made it a neceſſary condition, that penitents ſhould make confeſſion of their ſecret ſins, except to God only, (the caſe as to thoſe ſins, whereby they have injur'd others without making reſtitution, is different) there can be no abſolute neceſſity why they ſhould make ſuch confeſſion.

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* *James* 5. 16.

It is farther ſaid, when we are requir'd to make confeſſion of our ſins, we are to underſtand ſuch ſins, as principally reſpecting publick ſcandals given to the world, or private injuries done to one another *. In other caſes, this duty imports the acknowledgment we make of our offences, private or publick, to God, but no where directly to the prieſt.

However, as confeſſion is, under certain circumſtances, a duty; as the prieſt is our proper ſpiritual guide; as all his adminiſtrations are ſuppos'd, for that reaſon, to be attended with a ſpecial benediction of God; as he is inveſted with a power, upon our repentance, of remitting ſins; and, laſtly, as a particular confeſſion of ſin is one good evidence of a true repentance, it ſeems, upon the whole matter, the ſafeſt and moſt comfortable method we can take, when we appear in the form of penitents, to make a particular confeſſion of our ſins to him, in order to our receiving the ſtronger aſſurances of their being, in truth, remitted to us.

But whether this be incumbent on us, in point of ſtrict duty, or not; whether a particular confeſſion of their ſins be, in any caſe, neceſſary, in order to qualify ſinners for the ſacerdotal abſolution; or whether other general teſtimonies of their repentance be ſufficient to this end; it ſeems highly requiſite, if not abſolutely neceſſary, to all true penitents, where the ſacerdotal abſolution can be had, that, as it is a means God has appointed to declare the forgiveneſs of ſins, it ought to be had. And that he therefore who dies without thinking himſelf oblig'd to have any regard to the ſacerdotal office, in this reſpect, or in contempt of it, dies, to ſpeak in the ſofteſt terms, in a very dangerous ſtate; both as he refuſes God's pardon in his own way of applying it; and as he cannot be ſuppos'd, while he does ſo, to be really, in other reſpects, a true penitent.

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* *Numb.* 5. 6, 7. *James* 5. 16.

I deſire it may be obſerv'd, this is only ſpoken on ſuppoſition, that a dying ſinner, who may have the benefit of the ſacerdotal abſolution, wilfully ſlights it, as a vain, or inſignificant ceremony. We do not ſay that a ſinner, who dies without ſuch abſolution, dies, for that reaſon, impenitent, any more, than that he, who dies without receiving the holy ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, provided he do not contemptuouſly decline the reception of it; which, tho' generally requiſite, yet is not abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation.

The objections, whether from the weakneſs or wickedneſs of thoſe to whom this power is aſſerted, are altogether trifling. If a prince pardon or reprieve a malefactor, it is not neceſſary that he ſhould in perſon declare him pardon'd or repriev'd; tho' this may be done by ſome ſubordinate, or, as it may poſſibly happen, by ſome very corrupt miniſter, it is not therefore leſs valid; and it is authentick, becauſe the malefactor cannot be pardon'd or repriev'd without it; for he who has the power, in either reſpect, may execute it in his own way, either immediately, or by commiſſion to others.

It is a popiſh doctrine, directly repugnant to the twenty ſixth article of our church, that the efficacy of any religious ordinances depends on the perſonal qualifications of the adminiſtrator. The article being drawn up with great judgment, I ſhall recite the principal part of it. *Altho' in the viſible church the evil be ever mingled with the good, and ſometimes the evil have chief authority in the miniſtration of the word and ſacraments; yet foraſmuch as they do not the ſame in their own name, but in Chriſt's, and do miniſter by his commiſſion and authority, we may uſe their miniſtry, both in hearing the word of God, and in the receiving of the ſacraments. Neither is the effect of Chriſt's ordinance taken away by their wickedneſs: Nor the grace of God's gifts diminiſh'd from ſuch, as by faith, and rightly do receive the ſacraments miniſtred unto them; which be eſſential, becauſe of Chriſt's inſtitution and promiſe, altho' they be miniſtred by evil men.*

Which words were not only deſign'd to obviate certain phanatical notions, which obtain'd at the beginning of the Reformation, and had been tranſmitted down by ſucceeding enthuſiaſts to the time, when the articles were compil'd; but they had particular reſpect to a moſt dangerous error taught in the church of *Rome*, that the intention of him who adminiſters the ſacraments is eſſential to the grace and efficacy of them. And ſo far, indeed, this doctrine ſeems to be founded on ſome reaſonable ground, that if any qualification ſhould be abſolutely neceſſary to the adminiſtrator, to render a divine ordinance effectual, that, concerning his intention, has, in the reaſon of the thing, a ſuperior and the faireſt claim. But it is not unuſual for men, even in the heat of their zeal againſt Popery, to advance ſuch notions, as directly tend to ſupport ſome of the worſt and moſt pernicious doctrines of Popery.

But, to purſue the argument, what connexion is there between a ſupernatural or divine power, and any natural or human means? Or what have the perſonal qualifications of men to do with conferring any act of divine grace? Since the inſtitutions of God only operate the effect proper to them, becauſe they are his inſtitutions; he can indifferently make wicked or good, fallible or infallible men, the occaſional means of producing it. Bread and wine, as ſuch, have no natural propriety in the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, to convey grace to thoſe who partake of them: Neither does it appear that the waters of *Jordan* had any peculiar virtue above that of other rivers, towards healing the leproſy; but if God will give and appropriate a ſupernatural efficacy to any means, excluſive of other means, what can oppoſe, or who ſhall diſpute his will?

It is a groundleſs inſinuation, and not the leſs ſo for being deſign'd as a popular one, that this doctrine concerning ſacerdotal abſolution ſubjects the laity to the clergy; it only ſubjects them to the inſtitution of God. If God have given authority to any of the clergy of abſolving ſinners, to deny them that authority, from any conſequences which may be thought inconvenient from their claiming it, is at once to withdraw our ſubjection from God, and to reflect on his wiſdom, as being the author of an inconvenient inſtitution, and, for that reaſon, unworthy of him. And it might, with equal reaſon, be pretended, the command of *Eliſha* to *Naaman*, to go and waſh ſeven times in the river *Jordan*, render'd that *Aſſyrian*, by a neceſſary conſequence, the prophet's vaſſal.

I ſhall take notice but of one objection more, which appears to lie againſt what has been ſaid. It may be pretended, that the doctrine, which makes particular confeſſion of ſin ſo highly requiſite at leaſt, if not in certain caſes neceſſary, to the pardon of the ſinner, is of very ill conſequence, with reſpect to the peace and happineſs of ſociety; as this doctrine gives the clergy an opportunity, not only of diſcovering the ſecrets, wherein private perſons, and private families, but ſometimes wherein the whole community, and even whole nations, are concern'd; particularly, where wicked men are employ'd by direction of thoſe, (as it has ſometimes happen'd) who are at the head of publick affairs, in deſigns, which can by no means bear to be examin'd by the ſtrict rules of honour and juſtice, or which, if they ſhould be known, might bring an indelible infamy on the authors of them.

Were this objection really attended with all the inconveniences, that are thought to follow from it, yet, I conceive, it ought not to be admitted againſt the reaſons of a divine poſitive inſtitution. The rule will ſtill hold true, that we ſhould hearken unto God, rather than unto men. But the inconveniences objected are merely accidental, and the danger of them leſs, from the infamy, to ſay nothing of any other puniſhment, which accompanies, and ought to accompany the diſcovery of any ſecret reveal'd in confeſſion. An infamy to any one, who has the leaſt regard to the ſacredneſs or dignity of his office, more inſupportable than death, or any kind of death, which the engines of this world can be employ'd to inflict.

As ſhame is one of the moſt powerful reſtraints in nature to a vicious inclination, and nothing ſecures our innocence more than the apprehenſion of what the world will think, or ſay, if ſuch a deſign or action ſhould once come to be diſcover'd, the fear of doing, what ſinners ſhould be afterwards under a religious obligation to confeſs, would certainly have a powerful tendency, rather to promote the common good and happineſs of mankind; by preventing that corruption, and thoſe ſecret villanies, which occaſion ſo much diſorder in the world; and by obliging men to ſuch a virtuous and regular conduct, as would render them, in their particular ſtations, more ſubſervient to the common intereſts of ſociety.

As to that part of the objection relating to men, who are employ'd for reaſons, or ſome pretended neceſſities of ſtate, in the conduct or execution of ſuch deſigns, as are not fit to be nam'd, it will be time enough to conſider the force of it, when it can be prov'd that it is lawful, on any occaſion whatever, *to do evil that good may come of it*; or that it is better to *put confidence* in the wicked ſchemes of fallible and impotent men, than *to truſt in the Lord.*

Of the CREED.

ARTICLE XI.

The Reſurrection of the Body.

THAT after death our ſouls and bodies ſhall be re-united, which is the doctrine we here profeſs to believe, is alſo an article of faith peculiar to the chriſtian revelation. For it cannot be prov'd from any principles of human reaſon, either that the body of man has a natural power of raiſing itſelf to life again, as the ſoul has of ſubſiſting, in a future ſtate; or that God is oblig'd, by any of his attributes, to exert a ſupernatural power, in order to the reſurrection of it.

The heathen writers, indeed, ſometimes mention the ghoſts of departed men, and repreſent them, as appearing in a viſible form, retaining in the ſhades below their former ſhape, and having all the actions which were proper to their bodies in this life: Yet theſe notions were rather conſider'd as poetical amuſements, than as having any certain, or even probable grounds, in the natural reaſon of things. All we can infer from them, is, that the heathens did believe, the ſoul, after this life, would ſhift the ſcene of its reſidence into ſome bodily vehicle, and even, perhaps, reſembling a human body; but, withal, they conceiv'd, it immediately inform'd ſuch a body, after its paſſing into another ſtate, compos'd of certain particles of matter, altogether different from thoſe, whereof it was compos'd here. They had no notion, that it could be deſign'd, at any time, to inform the ſame bodily numerical ſubſtance, to which it was united in this world.

The reſurrection, in this ſenſe, appears to have been a new doctrine to many of the Jews themſelves; by whom therefore St.

Paul declares, *he was call'd in queſtion* *, becauſe he taught and aſſerted it. From whence, it is highly reaſonable to conclude, that, by his doctrine of the reſurrection, we are to underſtand the identity of the riſing body. For the Jews certainly had a notion, that the Patriarchs, with the reſt of their fathers or friends deceas'd, had a diſtinct bodily ſubſiſtence in another life. Our Saviour, in the parable of *Lazarus* and the rich man, accommodates himſelf to this notion. It may rather admit of diſpute, by the way, whether the Jews, generally ſpeaking, believ'd, upon any true or ſolid grounds, the immateriality of a human ſoul.

IF the apoſtle had only intended, that, after this life, men ſhall aſſume, or be united to one body or other, this doctrine could not have given occaſion for ſo great offence or ſurprize, at that time, either to the Jews or Gentiles. The Athenians, in particular, inſtead of mocking at this apoſtle, or taking the reſurrection according to his ſenſe of it, for *a God* †, might have obſerv'd, there was nothing, in the nature of it, inconſiſtent with the principles of theology, then commonly receiv'd and eſtabliſh'd.

WITH reſpect to the Jews, indeed, it is altogether unaccountable, how the reſurrection, in the apoſtle's ſenſe of it, could be controverted, if we conſider the expreſs revelations that had been made to them concerning this article ‡.

IT is confeſs'd one of the paſſages referr'd to in the margin from the book of *Job*, has been interpreted by the Jews, not as denoting *Job*'s belief concerning the reſurrection of the body, but his expectation of that ſtate of happineſs, which his piety and perſeverance would entitle him to, through the merits of his redeemer, in another world. But that the words do really import the reſurrection of the body, and are therefore apply'd by our church, in the *burial office*, to ſignify it, appears not only from hence, that this is the moſt natural and obvious conſtruction, and perfectly agreeable to the letter of them, but from the concluſion of this book, as render'd in the following manner, by the ſeptuagint. *So Job dy'd, being old, and full of days. But it is written, that he ſhall riſe again with thoſe, whom the Lord raiſes up.* Which words imply, at leaſt, that it is highly agreeable to an ancient tradition, if not a general notion among the Jews, that this paſſage of *Job* ſhould be explain'd concerning the reſurrection of the body, in a proper ſenſe.

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* *Acts* 23. 6. † *Acts* 17. 18. ‡ *Ezek.* 37. to ỳ. 10. *Dan.* 12. 2. *Job* 19. 26.

If any of the Jews therefore deny'd the reſurrection of the body, according to St. *Paul*'s doctrine, it was not becauſe the ſcriptures were ſilent upon this article, but becauſe, through their blindneſs or obſtinacy at that time, they *erred, not knowing the ſcriptures, or the power of God.*

The text of *Daniel, many that ſleep in the duſt of the earth ſhall awake,* is not capable of any other conſtruction, but in reſpect to the identity of the riſing body. As the ſoul cannot, with any propriety, be ſaid to ſleep in the duſt; as that only which was laid and ſleeps in the duſt, can riſe or awake out of the duſt; and as the bodies alone of men were repoſited in the grave, the words muſt neceſſarily be explain'd, if we will keep to any known rules of interpretation, ſo as to ſignify that the very ſame numerical body, which was dead, ſhall be the body, which riſes again; otherways, the bodies, which are ſaid to have ſlept in the graves, could not be thoſe bodies, which are ſaid to awake, but other bodies, compos'd of quite different particles of matter, from thoſe, whereof themſelves were compos'd. The conſtruction which the Socinians put upon this text, is altogether forc'd; they pretend that the words may be apply'd to ſignify the deliverance of thoſe, whom *Antiochus* had ſubdued from his power and tyranny. But in what language, or part of the world, is ſleeping in the duſt of the earth an expreſſion employ'd to ſignify a conquer'd enemy; or awaking out of the duſt of the earth, to ſignify liberty reſtor'd or victory; could ſo harſh and unuſual a metaphor, be allow'd; yet what proper relation has it to *everlaſting life*, or *everlaſting confuſion*, in the following part of the verſe.

We draw the like concluſion from the words of our bleſſed Saviour. *All that are in their graves ſhall hear the voice of the ſon of man; and ſhall come forth; they that have done good to the reſurrection of life; and they that have done evil to the reſurrection of damnation* *. Of the ſame import are thoſe words of St. *John*, where, repreſenting by a prophetical ſpirit the circumſtances and proceſs of the laſt judgment, he declares, *the ſea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and hell deliver'd up the dead which were in them* †. No intelligible account can be given of theſe words, according to the plain and natural ſignification of them, if the ſame bodies which were in their graves, and in the ſea, and which are ſaid to be deliver'd up, ſhould not really be deliver'd up, but ſome other bodies, compos'd of quite different parts of matter, in the room of them.

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* *John* 5. 28, 29. † *Rev.* 20. 13.

The anſwer, which the Socinians give to the former of theſe texts, (and the ſenſe they put upon the latter of them is no leſs forc'd) can by no means be admitted; eſpecially from men, who pretend to ſo peculiar a ſtrictneſs in their way of argumentation. They tell us, we are to underſtand by thoſe who *are in their graves*, perſons in a ſtate of ſin and impiety. Could this interpretation be allow'd agreeable, which it is not, to the phraſeology of ſcripture; yet there can be no pretence for it in this place. The context plainly ſhews, that the words are to be explain'd in reference to the laſt judgment, and *Chriſt*'s viſible appearance to paſs a final ſentence of happineſs or miſery on men, according to their good or their evil actions in this life; previous to which ſentence their bodies ſhall be rais'd to life again.

Neither is the principal paſſage apply'd by the Socinians, to juſtify their interpretation of theſe words, of any ſervice to them: It is cited from the prophet *Ezekiel*, where God declares to his people, *I will open your graves, and cauſe you to come out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Iſrael* *. But tho' death is ſometimes us'd in an improper ſenſe to repreſent men in a ſtate of ſin, yet they are never ſo repreſented by their lying in the grave, or as entring upon a new and more holy ſtate of life, by their coming out of the grave. Beſides, the place does not, by any arguments which can be drawn from the deſign of the prophet, refer to the ſpiritual deliverance of the Jews, from a ſtate of ſin; but only to their temporal deliverance from a ſtate of ſervitude and captivity.

The following words, concerning the reſurrection of ſome *to life*, of others *to damnation*, do alſo directly overthrow this comment of the Socinians; it is little leſs than a contradiction in terms, to ſay, that they who have done good ſhould, as a reward or in conſequence of their piety, riſe to everlaſting life, from a ſtate of ſpiritual death.

To argue, that the original word, which we render *to riſe again*, does not neceſſarily import, when referr'd to the general reſurrection, the riſing again of thoſe numerical bodies which dy'd; is, we ſay, to argue after a manner which concludes nothing. For tho' the natural or common ſignification of words is not always to be retain'd, or may be ſometimes transferr'd to an improper ſenſe, yet it ought to be retain'd, where the reaſons of keeping to it are either evident and neceſſary, or there is no viſible occaſion of departing from it.

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* Ezek. 27. 12.

It might as juſtly be argued, that there is no God, in the proper ſenſe of the word, becauſe the name of God is ſometimes, in an improper ſenſe, attributed to man; as that, becauſe reſurrection is, in one or more places, to be explain'd figuratively, therefore we can draw no certain argument from the import of the word, in its true or literal ſenſe; not even where the context and ſcope of the argument oblige us to underſtand it in that ſenſe, and admit of no other.

If the reſurrection, after all, as importing the identity of the riſing body, be, in the nature of the thing, impoſſible, we readily grant this doctrine cannot be true, and that there is a neceſſity of explaining the texts I have mention'd in a metaphorical ſenſe. We have nothing therefore to do, but to prove the reſurrection, according to the ſcripture doctrine of it, poſſible; and to examine the arguments which are brought, on the other ſide, to ſhew, that it is impoſſible.

The poſſibility of it appears from what has already happen'd in fact. *Chriſt*, and other perſons who were actually dead, did riſe to life again, with the ſame bodies. From the reſurrection of *Chriſt*, the apoſtle particularly argues, and probably againſt thoſe who deny'd this article, as ſuppoſing it, in the nature of the thing, impoſſible. *If Chriſt be preach'd that he roſe from the dead, how ſay ſome among you, that there is no reſurrection of the dead?* The conſequence, from what has happen'd, to the poſſibility, at leaſt, of the like event in any time future, is clear and undeniable.

It will be of no ſignificancy to pretend here a diſtinction between bodies that are corrupted, and ſuch as, with reſpect to their principal parts, retaining their proper form and order, (thoſe, for inſtance, of *Chriſt* and *Lazarus*) only ceaſe to have any communication with the ſoul, and to perform the functions of life proper to them: Becauſe a divine power is equally neceſſary towards reſtoring a dead body to life, or to the union it had before with the ſoul, as towards diſpoſing the ſeveral parts of ſuch a body, however broken, or at whatever diſtance ſeparated, into their proper form and order again. Yet if, according to our way of apprehending things, a ſtronger energy of divine power ſhould be requir'd on the latter account, ſtill, as the reſurrection is, and muſt be allow'd poſſible to the divine power in both caſes, 'tis equally abſurd, whatever difficulties may ariſe from the diſparity between them in other reſpects, to argue againſt the poſſibility of the reſurrection in either caſe.

But, admitting there were any force in this argument, againſt the inſtances produc'd of the reſurrection of *Chriſt* and *Lazarus*, as being inſufficient to prove the poſſibility of the reſurrection in general; yet it cannot be pretended to have any weight againſt the inſtances we produce, from the *many bodies of ſaints which aroſe*, at our Saviour's death, *and came out of their graves* *; ſeveral of which, there is the higheſt probability, during the interval of their lying there, had been corrupted.

The argument, which appears to be attended with the greateſt difficulty, in reference to the doctrine we are aſſerting, lies in the following queſtion: When the bodies of men, that are devour'd by fiſh, or other animals, and afterwards converted into their proper ſubſtance, which affording nutriment to human bodies, are again incorporated with them, and become conſtituent or vital parts of them; how can ſuch parts, at the reſurrection, have relation to one perſon, more than to another? So that, as the Jews argued concerning the ſeven brethren, who ſucceſſively married the ſame woman, *whoſe wife ſhall ſhe be at the reſurrection?* It may be queſtion'd, which of the perſons, with whom thoſe fluctuating particles have ſeverally been incorporated, ſhall, or can, at laſt, in propriety belong? Whether to him, who was originally devour'd by other animals, or perhaps by ſome of the ſame ſpecies, or to any of thoſe, into whoſe fleſh or ſubſtance his own was afterwards converted.

In anſwer to this, we ſay,

1. It is not neceſſary to denominate the ſame body, that it ſhould conſiſt of every individual part, which has at any time compos'd it, or immediately before the change incident to it. For then no man could have the ſame numerical body, I do not ſay wherewith he was born, but which he had the laſt moment. It is ſufficient to our purpoſe, in aſſerting the identity of the riſing body, that it ſhould conſiſt of ſome conſiderable parts, at leaſt, of the body which dy'd.

2. It is only a ſmall part of the human body devour'd by any animal, which is converted into the ſubſtance of that animal, and much leſs, in proportion, which is converted into the nutriment ſucceſſively receiv'd from it. So that it may be ſaid, there is nothing contributed by ſuch a tranſmutation towards forming an organical part of another human body, or any part, to which it ſhall be vitally united. As to the caſe of canibals, where the converſion of that human fleſh they devour is more immediate, and in a greater quantity, if ſo little a ſhare of what we eat (ſcarce one part, as ſome have obſerv'd, in a hundred) be digeſted into the ſubſtance of our bodies, it is probable, that hu-

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* *Matt.* 27. 53.

man fleſh, being ſo very unfit for nutriment, what is incorporated of it with the ſubſtance of thoſe canibals, is ſtill much leſs in proportion.

3. It may be farther ſuppos'd, that in all animals there are certain conſtituent inſenſible principles, which contain in miniature the ſeveral parts of the whole body, and that the foreign matter, taken in by way of nutriment, which fills and diſtends the bodies of men, and augments the members of it, is not ſtrictly eſſential to it, but only convenient for him, as ſerving to many wiſe and good ends of providence, reſpecting his preſent ſtate. So that while theſe particles of foreign matter are in a continual flux, the original or fundamental principle, which properly conſtitutes his body, and from which it ought to be denominated, through all the changes of life or death remains itſelf fix'd and unchang'd; without confuſion of parts, or the leaſt danger of incorporating with other bodies. The illuſtration which St. *Paul* uſes, from an inſtance in the vegetable life, ſeems very much to favour this hypotheſis. A grain of corn, after the other ſenſible parts of it are corrupted, gradually unfolds itſelf firſt into the ſtalk, then the blade, afterwards the ear, and at laſt into another grain of the ſame form. I have no occaſion here to obſerve how this effect is produc'd from the ſame grain, in variety of inſtances. From hence it is ſufficient for my purpoſe to obſerve, that, beſides the parts which are corrupted, there is a ſeminal principle, which, by juſt degrees, is dilated after this curious ſurprizing manner, containing in it thoſe ſeveral parts, which are viſibly augmented, without ſuffering any corruption or foreign mixture itſelf.

4. The difficulty here objected, being principally founded on a ſuppoſition of what, in the natural courſe of things, may poſſibly happen, it cannot be argued againſt the poſſibility of what God has expreſſly declar'd ſhall happen. He will rather exert his power, (if, after all, there ſhould be any occaſion for his interpoſing to that end) towards preventing thoſe effects, which would render his deſign impracticable, than ſuffer it to prove abortive or ineffectual.

As to what is objected concerning the impoſſibility of the reſurrection, on account of thoſe particles of a human body, which are diſpers'd in different elements, and very different parts of the world, there is ſtill leſs appearance of difficulty or argument in it. This objection muſt be ſuppos'd to lie, either againſt the power or knowledge of God, or againſt both theſe attributes. Either he cannot diſtinguiſh thoſe ſeparate parts from other parts, wherewith they are afterwards united, ſo as to know what perſons, or which members of the body they properly and originally belong'd to; or if this may be known, that he cannot remand, or, by an immediate act of his will, reſtore them to their former order and reſpective functions.

So far as the argument relates to the knowledge of God, it is not founded in the nature of this attribute; for his omniſcience is confeſs'd by all who believe a God; but it wholly ariſes from a a difficulty in our conceiving the extent of his knowledge: And it is contrary to all the rules of reaſoning, in other caſes, that any difficulty on one ſide, ſhould be urg'd againſt a truth acknowledg'd on both ſides.

The like anſwer will here ſerve, in reſpect to the power of God. Beſides, that it is eaſy for us to conceive how, by a bare act of his will, he can collect the ſcatter'd parts of our bodies, however broken or diſpers'd, and remand them to their proper places, as how he originally form'd them according to this regular and wonderful ſyſtem out of the duſt, and that created out of nothing. Nay, it ſeems a matter of more eaſy conception, that an artiſt, when any curious ſyſtem of work is taken in pieces, ſhould be able to put them exactly together again, eſpecially if it was of his own conſtruction, and he knows readily to what part every piece belongs, and where to find and reſtore it, than that he ſhould originally have compos'd ſuch a work. All the difference in the illuſtration, is, that God, who needs no inſtruments or deliberation, can deſign or effect his work at once; whereas intenſe thought and application are previouſly neceſſary to men, both towards the production of any artificial curious work, and in order to rectify or repair it.

It was, upon all theſe conſiderations, equally an argument of the ignorance, and impotent malice of the heathens, to burn the bodies of the primitive martyrs, and then to ſcatter their aſhes in the air, with a deſign of expoſing thereby this doctrine more openly, and towards preventing the effects of it. For had they argued in the leaſt upon the common notion of a Deity, as an omniſcient and almighty being, they might eaſily, or rather, they muſt neceſſarily have form'd this concluſion, that as nothing can be conceal'd from infinite knowledge, ſo nothing, which is a poſſible object of power, can be render'd impracticable to infinite power.

The oppoſition this doctrine met with from the heathens, is the more unaccountable, becauſe ſeveral of the ancient philoſophers expreſs'd themſelves after a manner, which diſcover'd they were not altogether ſtrangers to it. *Grotius* * obſerves this concerning the Stoicks in general; and that the purgation of the world, which they taught, from the commerce of wicked men by fire *, which ſuppoſes their reſuſcitation to that end, did not obſcurely imply this doctrine. That learned † author farther cites *Theopompus* among the peripateticks, as aſſerting it a doctrine deliver'd by thoſe, who were moſt eſteem'd for wiſdom and occult knowledge, that men ſhould be reſtor'd to life again, and become immortal; and that there ſhould be a revolution of all things in the ſame courſe, and according to the ſame laws of motion as before.

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* De ver. rel. Chriſt. lib. 2. c. 10.

But might we not then, had the ſcriptures determin'd nothing concerning this article of the reſurrection, have diſcover'd by the light of our own minds, if not abſolutely concluſive, yet very probable arguments to induce our belief of it? If it has no foundation in the reaſon of the thing, how came the ancient philoſophers, tho' in other words, to teach and aſſert it?

We may conſider what is here propos'd, as reſpecting either the union of the ſoul at a determinate period after death, to ſome body or other; or to the ſame numerical body, wherewith it was united in this life.

In the former reſpect, it may be argued, that the body of man being a conſiderable, if not properly a conſtituent part of him, and which diſcovers the immediate work of God in his formation, it is not reaſonable to believe, God deſign'd ſo admirable an eſſay of his power and wiſdom to continue only during the ſhort interval of this life, for a few years, a few days, and ſometimes only for a few moments, and that he would then for ever put a period to it; but that he will, in ſome convenient time, as he ſees proper, reſtore it to its former and original ſtate.

For tho' it is granted, that the body is only an occaſional means of conveying certain ſenſations to the ſoul, or of exciting them in it, and that God therefore can give us thoſe ſenſations by a ſpecial and direct act of his will, or by occaſion of any other means; whether we are in the body, or out of the body; yet he having once united the ſoul to the body, and eſtabliſh'd thoſe admirable laws of communication between them, whereby they act reciprocally upon one another; it is more agreeable to his wiſdom, as all *his ways are perfect*, to ſuppoſe, that whatever diſorder, in conſequence of man's diſobedience, may at preſent happen in his work, and cauſe, for a time, the diſſolution of it; yet God will not ſuffer the ends, for which he firſt made it, to be for ever fruſtrated; but will, one time or other, reſtore it according to its primitive conſtruction, whether to ſuffer the pains, or to *enjoy indiſſoluble in the heavens* the pleaſures awarded and proper to it.

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* Τὴν διὰ πυρὸς Κάθαρσιν τῶν κακῶς βεβιωκότων, ἣν ὕστερον ἐκπύρωσιν ἐκάλεσαν οἱ Στοϊκοί· καθ᾽ ὃν καὶ τὸν ἰδίως ποιὸν ἀναστήσεσθαι δογματίζουσι, τοῦτ᾽ ἐκεῖνο τὴν ἀνάστασιν περιέποντες. Clem. Strom. 5.

† In Loc.

So far as the queſtion, which I am conſidering, relates to the identity of the riſing body, ſome of the ancients, and they are follow'd by ſeveral modern theologers, have argu'd for the reaſonableneſs of believing the reſurrection in this ſenſe; ſince the body (ſay they) ought to be rewarded or puniſh'd according as it contributes, in the temper and appetites of it, to our good or evil actions in this life. But this is a way of arguing, which will not bear a philoſophical or ſtrict examination; for the body, properly ſpeaking, can neither ſuffer or enjoy, be puniſh'd or rewarded. Whatever material and duly organiz'd parts the ſoul is united to, it will have the ſame ſenſations, as if united to the ſame numerical body, which it now informs. Except it ſhould be ſaid, that the very particles, which now compoſe the body, will hereafter have ſome peculiar energy in them, according to the laws of union which ſhall then take place, that no other particles of matter could have had. But this is not eaſy to be conceiv'd; ſince all the particles of matter are equally diſpos'd to receive any form, which the divine architect may think fit to impreſs upon them. And therefore, even in this life, they are not the particles of matter, as ſuch, which compoſe our bodies, whereby our minds are ſo differently affected; but the different modifications of them.

Tho we aſſert therefore the identity of the riſing body, our aſſertion is rather founded on the the teſtimony of ſcripture; on the example of dead perſons recorded in it, who were reſtor'd to life again; and on the promiſe of God, that thoſe who are alive at the general reſurrection ſhall *not ſleep, but be chang'd*; than on any certain or inconteſtable proof, which we are able to produce from the reaſon of the thing.

The moſt probable and ſpecious argument, whether of the reſurrection in a larger ſenſe, or as more ſtrictly denoting the identity of the riſing body, is taken from the notion of a radical principle that properly conſtitutes the body of man, and which death itſelf is not able to deſtroy: Whatever parts of a more pure, refin'd, or celeſtial matter may be added to it at the reſurrection, there is reaſon to believe, that it ſhould, as having ſtill an aptitude and proper diſpoſition to that end, be united again to the ſame ſoul. For tho' God can form a like ſyſtem of other matter, and give it the ſame diſpoſition; yet it is more agreeable to the ſimplicity of thoſe laws, whereby he has determin'd to act, that he ſhould not at any time employ an extraordinary power, where he can effect his deſign according to the natural courſe or eſtabliſh'd order of things.

THERE can be no diſpute as to the proper ſubjects of the reſurrection; they are all mankind in general, *the juſt, and the unjuſt*; ſome ſhall be ſentenc'd to *the reſurrection of life*; others to *the reſurrection of damnation. We muſt all appear before the judgment ſeat of Chriſt.* And, indeed, the proceſs of the laſt judgment, to which the reſurrection is previous, with reſpect both to wicked and good men, plainly ſuppoſes, as this diſtinction comprehends all men, the univerſality of the laſt judgment, without diſtinction.

THE great queſtion, which has been long and much controverted in the church, is, whether, for a conſiderable period before the general reſurrection, there will not be ſome perſons, who had here given extraordinary proofs of their zeal and piety, whom our Saviour will particularly diſtinguiſh, by reſtoring them again to life, and to a ſtate of life abounding with an affluence of all the innocent pleaſures and advantages, which this world can be ſuppos'd to afford?

THIS notion, if we conſider it merely as traditionary, was at firſt deriv'd from *Papias* *, a diſciple of St. *John*, more diſtinguiſh'd, if we may credit *Euſebius*, by his piety and goodneſs, than by his penetration, or ſolidity of judgment. The principal text of ſcripture upon which it is founded, is that of the *Apocalyps. And I ſaw thrones, and they ſat upon them, and judgment was given unto them. And I ſaw the ſouls of them who were beheaded for the witneſs of Jeſus, and for the word of God, and which had not worſhip'd the beaſt, neither his image, neither had receiv'd his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands, and they lived and reign'd with Chriſt a thouſand years. But the reſt of the dead lived not again until the thouſand years were finiſh'd.—This is the firſt reſurrection* †.

BUT to theſe words, as brought in proof of the viſible reign of *Chriſt* with the ſaints upon earth, or the reſurrection of any of them, for the ſpace here mention'd, antecedently to the general reſurrection, ſeveral exceptions are made.

1. FROM the connection, that is all along obſervable in the holy ſcriptures, between the reſurrection, and the laſt judgment ‡. Which being repreſented as univerſal, as commencing at the ſame time, and not till the end of the world **; it is argued, there is the ſame neceſſity of ſuppoſing a firſt and previous judgment of *Chriſt*, whereof the ſcriptures are perfectly ſilent, nay, to which they are directly repugnant; as of ſuppoſing, in a proper ſenſe, a a firſt reſurrection.

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* Eccleſ. hiſt. lib. 3. c. 35, 39. † *Rev.* 20. 4, 5. ‡ *Matt.* 25. 31.
1 *Theſſ.* 4. 16. *Acts* 3. 21. 2 *Tim.* 4. 1. ** 1 *Cor.* 15. 24, 25, &c.
1 *Theſſ.* 4. 15, 16.

2. So far as a viſible and triumphant reign of *Chriſt* is inferr'd from theſe words by the Chiliaſts, it is, in particular, not only irreconcileable with that expreſs declaration, that the *heavens muſt receive him until the times of reſtitution of all things*, but to the nature of his kingdom, and the reaſons of his diſclaiming all ſecular power and authority in the adminiſtration of it.

3. It is not ſaid in the viſion, that the apoſtle ſaw the bodies, but only *the ſouls of them, who were beheaded for the teſtimony of Jeſus*, &c. The words therefore are capable of being interpreted concerning that glory, with which the martyrs, as a reward of their conſtancy and fortitude, ſhall be crown'd, after ſome ſpecial and diſtinguiſhing manner in heaven, for the time here ſpecify'd before the general judgment.

4. This argument is drawn from a book of ſcripture abounding with allegories, and bold metaphorical expreſſions; and therefore, if any paſſage of it may admit of a figurative, tho' more forc'd ſenſe, it ſhould rather be interpreted according to that ſenſe, than in oppoſition to other plain and evident teſtimonies of ſcripture, which cannot poſſibly conſiſt with a literal conſtruction of it. Now it will be granted, I ſuppoſe, there is not the ſame evidence, as to the meaning of the ſeveral expreſſions in this place, and thoſe in the context, of laying hold on the *old dragon*, of binding him, of *Gog and Magog*, as there is of this propoſition, that the holy ſcriptures, in a ſtrict ſenſe, ſpeak but of one general reſurrection, and one general judgment.

The only particular that I farther propoſe to conſider under this article, relates to the ſtate of the body at the reſurrection, and the qualities proper to it. Concerning which, I ſhall lay down the following truths, or what I am induc'd from reaſon and ſcripture to believe ſo.

1. That the riſing body will, in general, retain, whatever changes it may undergo, all the properties belonging to it, as conſiſting of material parts; ſuch as extenſion, impenetrability, circumſcription; ſo that it cannot poſſibly be in all places at any time, or in more places than one at the ſame time. This argument will hold, and for that reaſon I principally mention it, equally to ſhew, that it is impoſſible *Chriſt* ſhould have a body diveſted of the properties eſſential to it, as that any of the ſaints ſhould have ſuch a body; ſince the eſſences of things are inſeparable by any power from the things themſelves, and every property that is eſſential to a body, is as neceſſary to the being of it as all the reſt of its properties; to deſtroy any one property eſſential to it, is to deſtroy entirely, at the ſame time, the nature of it; to make it a body, and yet no body; to render the

ſubſiſtence of it inconceiveable, or rather, indeed, to anhilate it.

2. That the body, at the reſurrection, ſhall be immortal. I do not here queſtion, if the bodies we ſhall then have will be immortal, by virtue of their natural conſtruction; ſo that they ſhall neither be capable of any inward decay, or of ſuffering any external violence: It is the ſame thing, as to all the ends of immortality, whether ſuch a conſtruction of them be, in the nature of the thing, poſſible, or whether they ſhall be preſerv'd for ever free from all diſorders from within, and all injuries from without, by ſome poſitive act of God, and by ſome ſpecial interpoſition, when it may be requiſite, of his providence. It is ſufficient that we are aſſur'd from the holy ſcriptures, we *ſhall then die no more, but be as the angels of God*; that this body, which is *ſown in corruption, ſhall be rais'd in incorruption*; in a word, that *this mortal, ſhall put on immortality*.

3. That our bodies, at the reſurrection, ſhall be ſublimated and refin'd to a degree of ſplendor and purity, the higheſt, perhaps, that matter is in itſelf capable of: Whereas they are now of a groſs conſiſtence, and ſubject to many feculent, and even putrid humours; they will then be all over bright and radiant, and in every part. They will *be rais'd in glory*; they will *ſhine like ſo many ſuns in the kingdom of God*; they will *be faſhion'd like the glorious body of Chriſt, according to the working whereby he is able even to ſubdue all things to himſelf*.

The part of our body, which may be ſuppos'd at preſent to bear the neareſt reſemblance to that ſplendor, wherein it will then appear, is the eye, which continually diſcovers a bright, or, ſhall I not ſay rather, a celeſtial flame glowing in it, which ſometimes diffuſes ſo ſtrong and penetrating a light, as lets us in, without the help of language, or any other key, into the ſecret motions and intents of the heart. An organ, the luſtre whereof no art can imitate; and no other object in the world, not any viſible glory of the ſun himſelf, appears to equal.

This reflection may ſerve to give us ſome idea of the happineſs, which will then conſiſt in the mutual advantages of converſation and friendſhip, the greateſt bleſſings whereof we are capable in this life, when we are ſo happy as to enjoy them in any competent degree of perfection; which, conſidering how much a great part of mankind govern themſelves according to appearances, and how eaſily, by that means, they impoſe upon others, is not ſo very common a caſe, as might be hop'd, or rather expected from the dignity of human nature. It may be queſtion'd, on the other hand, whether a greater number of perſons have not been undone by the infidelity, or the ſiniſter inſinuations of their pretended friends, than by the malice of their profeſs'd enemies.

BUT yet, if we are in ſo great meaſure, if not perfectly able to diſcover the true deſigns of men, or the diſpoſition they are really in towards us, from certain external ſignatures, and particularly of that admirable member I am conſidering; when the body is become all over viſible and luminous; when we ſhall, perhaps, be able to diſcover all the ſecret ſprings of motion in it, with the certain effects of thoſe laws, which will be eſtabliſh'd towards the communication between it and the ſoul, as every occaſion of diſtruſt or mutual ſuſpicion will, by that means, be perfectly remov'd, we ſhall then love, and know that we love one another, with all the ardour and confidence, from which the true and generous delights, whether of friendſhip, or any occaſional commerce, can only ariſe.

4. THAT at the reſurrection our bodies will be ſtrong and active, and have a power of motion, beyond what it may be poſſible for us to form any equal conception of here. We are expreſſly aſſur'd in the holy ſcriptures, that our bodies are *ſown in weakneſs, but rais'd in power*; that *they are ſown a natural body, and rais'd a ſpiritual body*: That is, a body approaching as near to certain qualities of a ſpirit, according to our imperfect ideas of it, as it is poſſible for a body to do. Now one proper nature of a ſpirit, in contradiſtinction to body, is the activity, and ſtronger powers of life and motion belonging to it. In alluſion to which, we call the parts of any body, which are moſt volatile, or operative, the ſpirits of it. By virtue of this quality proper to a ſpiritual body, we ſhall be able *to follow the lamb wherever he goeth* *. *For they that wait upon the Lord ſhall then renew their ſtrength; they ſhall mount up with wings, as eagles; they ſhall run, and not be weary; and they ſhall walk, and not faint* †.

THERE are very good arguments to be drawn from the reaſon of the thing, to prove the greateſt celerity of motion in a ſpiritual body. If the intermediate orbs be many of them at ſuch a vaſt inconceiveable diſtance from us, and from one another, of what an immenſe magnitude muſt the circle of heaven, the ſeat of the living God neceſſarily be? And yet it is highly reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that as no part of the city of God will be uninhabited, ſo there will be a free and ready communication between all the inhabitants of it, at what diſtance ſoever ſeparated, or employ'd in executing the divine will. And there is really, if we conſider the divine power, no more difficulty in conceiving, how a ſpiritual body ſhould paſs from one part of heaven to any part of it in a moment, or immediately, according to St. *Auſtin*'s doctrine, in conſequence of our willing it ſo to paſs *, than how the rays of light from the ſun ſhould reach us in ſo ſhort a time, at ſo great a diſtance, by the loweſt computation, from him.

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* *Rev.* 14. 4. † *Iſaiah* 40. 31.

But there is a neceſſity of our believing, from what has already happen'd in fact, that the bodies wherewith we ſhall riſe again will have the greateſt celerity imaginable, in order to their being, immediately after the reſurrection, tranſlated into heaven. Otherways, indeed, it is, in the nature of the thing, impoſſible, that the body of *Enoch* could, as yet, have reach'd one of the fix'd ſtars, or that it can reach any of them for the ſpace of ſeveral thouſand years to come, ſuppoſing this preſent ſyſtem of the world ſhould ſo long continue.

How unable ſoever we are to comprehend a motion, whereby our bodies, when rais'd again to life, ſhall paſs through all the intermediate ſpaces from one given point to another, almoſt as quick as thought; yet infinite power anſwers all objections againſt the poſſibility, and therefore where the nature of things require it, againſt our belief of a motion, which, let us ſuppoſe it perform'd in the leaſt ſpace of time we can poſſibly conceive, is, however, finite. He that gives motion to body, can give it in what degree he pleaſes, that body is capable of.

I have here principally conſider'd the qualities, which will belong to a human body, when glorify'd, upon the authority of holy ſcripture; tho' I have produc'd, at the ſame time, ſome natural reaſons for the credibility of them. There are ſeveral other queſtions relating to the ſtate of the ſaints after the reſurrection, (for to that I here confine my ſelf) which, as they cannot be ſo certainly determin'd, either by the light of our own minds, or from any teſtimony of divine revelation, I cannot think it neceſſary, that I ſhould particularly deſcend to examine. As, whether, when we riſe again, we ſhall all be of the ſame form or ſtature, and in all the bloom, beauty, and vigour of youth? Whether there will be then any difference of ſexes among the ſaints, more than the *angels of God*, and to what ends that difference, if admitted, will ſerve? Whether we ſhall retain the ſame ſenſes, and after what manner they will be affected with their reſpective objects? Theſe are only queſtions of curioſity, which thoſe who would be reſolv'd in, may conſult the ſchoolmen, or other learned authors, who have follow'd them in diſcuſſing matters of ſo great ſubtility. I ſatisfy my ſelf with barely mentioning theſe things, as it is by no means neceſſary for us, upon any terms of ſaving or evangelical faith, to know them; and as we may therefore, without any danger to our ſalvation, either wave the dicuſſion, or be entirely ignorant of them.

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* *Ubicunque erit voluntas, ibi erit ſtatim corpus.* De civ. Dei. lib. 22.

Of the CREED.

ARTICLE XII.

And the life everlaſting.

IF by life everlaſting we here only underſtand, in general, the immortality of the ſoul, we do not ſo much profeſs to believe a diſtinct doctrine, from what may poſſibly be deduc'd, in a human way of reaſoning, as a more full, clear, and inconteſtable evidence of it.

FOR it is certain, that a great part of the world, if this principle has not been in a manner univerſal, have ever entertain'd ſome confus'd notion, at leaſt, concerning the exiſtence of the ſoul in a future ſtate: And for the ſame reaſon, upon which they could ſuppoſe it would have a future exiſtence, it was natural for them to conclude it would exiſt to all futurity; except God ſhould interpoſe, by ſome ſpecial act of his will, to deſtroy or annihilate it: Which they could have no reaſonable grounds to believe that he would do, and which appears, indeed, derogatory to his wiſdom and goodneſs, to preſume that he ſhould do.

FOR the principal reaſons, upon which men could be induc'd to believe the ſoul immortal, muſt have been founded either in the natural deſires, wherewith they obſerv'd themſelves invincibly, and all times poſſeſs'd, of continuing in being; or in the ſimplicity of immaterial ſubſtance, and conſequently, the impoſſibility of its diſſolution; without which, according to the common notion they had of death, they could not conceive it capable of dying. But, take which of theſe arguments we pleaſe, if it proves, that the ſoul will ſubſiſt after death, it proves, at the ſame time, and with the ſame force, that it will for ever ſubſiſt.

The reaſon why the ſoul ſhould deſire to continue in being, (provided it be not condemn'd to a ſtate of miſery, which is not the caſe under conſideration) will never ceaſe: Nay, the continuance it has had already in being, will, in proportion to the time of it, rather tend to fortify that deſire, and render the thoughts of annihilation, after a longer taſte of life, ſtill more terrible and diſquieting to it. Whatever the philoſophers might diſpute concerning the preference of a ſtate, even in ſome degree miſerable, to an utter extinction of being; it will not be diſputed, that where the miſeries of life are not greater, or, upon the whole matter, apprehended greater than the enjoyments of it, there the reaſons of deſiring a farther term of life, will ſtill preponderate.

If it be therefore an argument of the future life of the ſoul, that it is poſſeſs'd with ſuch ſtrong, ſuch permanent and invincible deſires of living, this argument will always equally hold, if not in a ſtronger degree, to prove, why it ſhould live for ever.

Again, if it be an argument, that the ſoul will not immediately, or for ſome determinate period, ſuffer an extinction of life after the death of the body, becauſe it is a pure, ſimple, uncompounded eſſence, and cannot therefore admit a ſeparation of parts, the ſame argument will hold againſt the extinction of its life at any determinate period.

Yet whatever force there may be in theſe reaſons, and I am willing to allow them all the force whereof they are capable, to prove the natural immortality of the ſoul, they are far from eſtabliſhing the truth of this doctrine, after ſo ſatisfactory a manner, as the authority of a divine revelation, to that end. Neither, were they in themſelves ſtrictly concluſive, are all men ſo capable, upon their being laid together, of diſcovering ſeverally the connection of them, or the obligation they are under to aſſent to them, as they are of making this plain and undeniable inference, that whatever God expreſſly reveals, is to be aſſented to as true, for that reaſon. A divine revelation, at the ſame time it ſuperſedes all human methods of arguing, prevents our being impos'd upon, which is too ordinary a caſe, eſpecially with perſons of weak minds, by ſpecious probabilities, inſtead of real truths.

This is an argument we diſcover the evidence of at once, and which cannot deceive us. If *Chriſt* has declar'd, that *the wicked ſhall go into everlaſting puniſhment, and the righteous into life eternal*; that all who *believe in him ſhall not periſh, but have ever-*

laſting life; that *they who kill the body are not able to kill the ſoul.* Certainly ſuch plain declarations are at once more proper to perſuade the aſſent, and generally more adapted to the capacities of men, than a train of proofs concerning the immortality of the ſoul, with what perſpicuity or juſt connection ſoever deduc'd; if, after all, the immortality of the ſoul, whatever it might have been, has ever been, in fact, ſo deduc'd, by any heathen writer.

THREE of the moſt conſiderable names in antiquity, and from whom, as they have ſaid ſo many excellent things upon the ſubject of morality and religion, it might be expected we ſhould draw the greateſt light in the preſent argument, are thoſe of *Plato*, *Tully*, and *Seneca*. But none of them will be pretended to have given any demonſtration of the point in queſtion, or even to have argued upon it in a manner proper to perſuade thoſe, who are not otherways very well diſpos'd to believe it. Why ſhould it, indeed, be expected, that ſuch reaſons, whereby it appears they were not fully convinc'd themſelves, ſhould be more convincing to others? For, conſidering the common ambiguity of words, how careful ſoever we are to avoid it, a man muſt naturally be ſuppos'd to ſee the force or evidence of his own arguments in a better light, than that, wherein he can be ſuppos'd to repreſent them to others.

PLATO, to begin with him, introduces *Socrates*, and, upon that occaſion, is interpreted to ſpeak his own ſentiments, as entertaining, in his laſt moments, ſome probable hopes of a future life to good men, but has not the aſſurance to ſpeak of it as a topick of conſolation to himſelf or his friends, who then aſſiſted him, that could be really depended upon [*]. He adds afterwards, if it be an error to believe a future life, it is at preſent a commodious and agreeable error, and which will afterwards do him no injury, becauſe it will die with him [†].

CICERO ſpeaks as if he had deſign'd to render the very words of *Socrates*: He profeſſes himſelf willing to embrace the error, if it be really an error, concerning the ſoul's immortality; and that he would not be undeceiv'd in a point, wherein, if he ſhould happen to be miſtaken, he is ſo agreeably impos'd upon [‡].

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[*] Παρ' ἄνδρας τε ἐλπίζω ἀφίξεσθαι ἀγαθὺς, καὶ τῦτο μὲν ἐκ ἂν πάνυ διϊσχυρισαίμην. In Phæd.

[†] Ἀλλ' ὀλίγον ὕστερον ἀπολεῖται.

[‡] *Quòd ſi in hoc erro, quòd animos hominum immortales eſſe credo, libenter erro, nec mihi hunc errorem, quo delector extorqueri*, &c. He expreſſes his diffidence, as to this article, in another place, rather in more ſtrong terms. *Expone igitur mihi, niſi moleſtum eſt, primum animos, ſi potes remanere poſt mortem; tum ſi id minus obtinebis (eſt enim arduum) docebis carere omni malo mortem.* Tuſcul. 1.

SENECA, in his way of reaſoning upon the ſame ſubject, is not able to arrive at any greater certainty. The general conſent of mankind, and the authority of certain great men before him, ſeem to have been the principal grounds upon which he believ'd the ſoul's immortality. He declares, that as to this doctrine, he thinks it proper to follow the publick opinion [*]; and that if peradventure, any regard be due to the ſentiments of thoſe, who had the greateſt reputation for wiſdom, they whom we imagine to be dead, have only ſhifted the ſcene of their reſidence, and gone before us [†].

I do not ſpeak this to detract from the natural proofs of the ſoul's immortality, which I allow, when well and methodically deduc'd, to be very ſtrong; but to ſhew, that great men, without the benefit of divine revelation, have not always carry'd their diſquiſitions ſo far as they might have done, even upon ſubjects of the laſt conſequence to themſelves and all mankind. From which reflection, a good improvement may be made towards rendring us more ſenſible of the advantages of divine revelation, as with reſpect to religious truths in general, ſo with reſpect to the aſſurances given by it, of the ſoul's immortality. And therefore St. *Paul* takes a proper and juſt occaſion to repreſent it as one peculiar advantage of the chriſtian revelation, that whatever general or more imperfect notices men had before concerning a future ſtate, yet *Chriſt* has now *brought life and immortality to light through the goſpel* [‡].

BUT let us grant that the immortality of the ſoul could have been made out antecedently to any divine revelation, by clear and inconteſtable arguments drawn from the reaſon of the thing; and that the belief of it did not depend, as may be more reaſonably preſum'd, on ſome general tradition. For, indeed, thoſe probable ſurmizes, we have mention'd, from ſome of the greateſt men among the ancients, could not be ſuppos'd to lay a ſufficient foundation for the univerſal idolatry of the pagan world; which, ſo far as it conſiſted in the worſhip of departed heroes, or other perſons of diſtinguiſh'd character here, neceſſarily ſuppos'd the belief of this article. Upon a conceſſion, I ſay, that for theſe, or any other reaſons, the immortality of the ſoul had been a ſettled article of natural religion, yet, in the chriſtian ſenſe of it, and as it is expreſs'd by *everlaſting life*, no perſon, in a mere ſtate of natural religion, had, or could have, any certain grounds for the belief of it.

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[*] *Utor hâc perſuaſione publicâ.*

[†] *Et fortaſſe ſi modò ſapientium vera fama eſt, recipitque nos locus aliquis, quem putemus periſſe, præmiſſus eſt.*

[‡] 2 *Tim.* 1. 10.

ALL we can infer from the natural immortality of the ſoul, taking this doctrine for granted, is, that in a future ſtate the ſoul will be happy or miſerable, according to the good or evil actions done in the body, which it here inform'd. That virtuous perſons, in particular, who are the ſubject of our preſent enquiry, ſhall be in a ſtate of eaſe, and tranquillity, or, in ſome meaſure, proportion'd to their different qualifications, of pleaſure; this is as far as human reaſon could poſſibly carry its conjectures upon this argument. But whether the ſoul ſhould immediately paſs into ſuch a ſtate, or into ſome other previous and probationary ſtate, and ſo ſucceſſively on to an indefinite ſpace of time, is what men could never reſolve upon any principles of natural reaſon, and what, ſetting aſide the authority of divine revelation, they are not ſtill able to reſolve, nor ever will be.

BUT what are theſe, or any like conjectures, to the notion of *life everlaſting*, as expreſs'd in the goſpel, or to the aſſurances given us in it of our being tranſlated after this life to the kingdom of God? Of our being *made heirs with God, and joint heirs with Chriſt, the Son of God*; of our *ſeeing God as he is*; of our *being made like unto him, partakers of the divine nature*; of our *ſtanding before the throne of God*; our *ſerving him day and night in his temple*, with his *holy angels, and the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect*; of our having even theſe *vile bodies* in the holy city, the new *Jeruſalem, faſhion'd like the glorious body of Jeſus Chriſt himſelf*; and, with reſpect to the glorious ſtate, whereof it ſeems to give us the loweſt, tho', conſidering the preſent impreſſions which ſenſible objects are apt to make upon us, a very proper conception, that *they ſhall hunger no more, nor thirſt any more*; that they ſhall be no longer ſenſible of *pain or ſorrow*, or ſubject to the *power of death*.

THESE are ſome of the expreſſions in ſcripture, whereby that life, which Chriſtians profeſs their belief of in a future ſtate, is repreſented to them. And they give us an idea of what it is to live indeed; what it is to have human nature, in regard both to ſoul and body, advanc'd to all the perfection, and poſſeſs'd of all the happineſs, whereof it is capable. But where do we meet with the like notions concerning a life after this, among the beſt or wiſeſt of the heathen writers? If now and then they ſpeak in a more ſublime ſtrain, concerning the happineſs or purgation of the ſoul in another world, as their ſentiments on this head are far from being ſo juſt or diſtinct, as thoſe we meet with in the inſpir'd writings; ſo they are rather perhaps to be attributed to ſome traditionary account, which might be deriv'd originally from *Noah* himſelf, or afterwards from the jewiſh writings, (the evidence whereof, as to a future life, will be conſider'd in a proper place) than from any natural or ſolid principles, whereby men were able to prove the reaſonableneſs or certainty of this doctrine: Which yet, I do not queſtion, does, in the nature of it, admit of ſuch proofs, as are very ſatisfactory. But it is one thing for a doctrine to be reaſonable in itſelf; and another thing to demonſtrate the truth of it antecedently to any divine revelation, upon reaſons that are clear and convincing.

When the fathers therefore, in certain paſſages, ſeem to deny the natural proofs of the ſoul's immortality, they are not to be explain'd, as if it was their deſign to inſinuate, that we cannot, by natural reaſons, prove the ſoul to be immortal; but either that the proofs which had been commonly urg'd by philoſophers to this end, were not ſufficient; or that by immortality, they did not mean, nor had any notion of it, in the ſenſe, according to which we Chriſtians believe it, and as expreſs'd by *life everlaſting* in the holy ſcriptures: Neither, indeed, could they have any ſuch notion. For our title to that life being founded in an arbitrary act of divine grace, and not in the merit of any thing we had done, or were capable of doing, in order to give us a right to it, there was no poſſible way of knowing, whether God, out of his infinite mercy, would really entitle us to it, till he had particularly declar'd his will to that end. The apoſtle accordingly argues, that *eternal life is the gift of God, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord* *. And in the preceding part of the ſame diſcourſe, he repreſents it as the peculiar privilege of Chriſtians, to whom this promiſe is made, that *they ſtand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God* †.

I have here taken it for granted, that life everlaſting imports an endleſs and perpetual duration; and, one would think indeed, that a formal proof of this point might be altogether unneceſſary. However, as ſome of thoſe terms in ſcripture, which are apply'd to ſignify the eternity of hell torments, are alſo apply'd to ſignify the eternal joys of heaven; and yet it is pretended, (how unjuſtly, will afterwards appear) that thoſe terms do not ſtrictly import the torments of hell will never have a period put to them, it may, for the ſame reaſon, be queſtion'd, whether, from thoſe expreſſions, we can ſtrictly conclude the perpetuity of our future happineſs in heaven? Now, admitting we could not, yet this way of arguing will prove nothing againſt us; becauſe there may be, and certainly are, other very ſtrong expreſſions denoting the eternity of the joys of heaven, beſides thoſe which we alledge in order to prove the eternity of hell torments; tho' pretended, on the other hand, not to prove them.

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* *Rom.* 6. 31. † Ch. 5. 2.

I ſhall only obſerve, by the way, that when men have once openly advanc'd any falſe hypotheſis (either from a motive of vanity or intereſt, or perhaps out of a miſtaken zeal) how eaſily they are ſometimes induc'd, in favour of it, to ſacrifice the moſt evident truths, and ſuch as it would never have otherways enter'd into their thoughts to queſtion or diſpute. We are in all caſes, indeed, too much inclin'd to juſtify our ſelves at any rate: But this inclination, which tends to gratify the pride of men, one of the moſt general and reigning paſſions of human nature, diſcovers its power on no occaſion more, than in the difficulty we find towards bringing an author to repentance. Yet why ſhould it be matter of greater aſtoniſhment to us, that vain writers, when they are put under that neceſſity of ſupporting their vanity, ſhould ſeek to cover one error with another, than that vicious perſons ſhould ſo ordinarily make one crime an argument or apology for another.

Now if we examine thoſe expreſſions in ſcripture, whereby life everlaſting is deſcrib'd to us, they are as full, in order to denote the eternity of it, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe, as they could have been, ſuppoſing them really deſign'd by the Spirit of God to be taken in that ſenſe. And where we have all the evidence for the truth of any doctrine, which we could have had, on ſuppoſition of its being really true, it will be very natural to ſuſpect, that there are ſome other grounds for denying the truth of it, than thoſe which are pretended from the terms whereby it is expreſs'd. Beſides, the ſenſe of words in ſcripture is not to be determin'd from an occaſional, or even perhaps common acceptation of them, but from the ſenſe, which the context, or thread of the argument where they are employ'd, obliges us to put upon them; otherways it might ſtrictly be inferr'd, that when it is ſaid, *Samuel ſhould ſerve the Lord for ever*, that the expreſſion *for ever*, when us'd on any other occaſion, can, at the moſt, be only apply'd to ſignify the utmoſt period of human life. This term therefore muſt be explain'd, as all other terms ought to be, according to the nature of the thing it is intended to ſignify, and the circumſtances of the place, wherein it ſtands. When it can only denote a temporary continuance of any thing, there is a neceſſity of limiting the ſenſe to ſome determinate ſpace of time. By this rule, the word *everlaſting*, when apply'd to the jewiſh diſpenſation, or any particular poſitive ordinance of it, could not poſſibly be underſtood, as ſignifying any duration beyond the period when the jewiſh œconomy was to ceaſe, and the chriſtian to take place. But when we ſpeak concerning the joys of heaven, as eternal, there is no neceſſity, from the nature of the thing, to limit the ſenſe of the word *eternity:* Nay, it ſeems rather repugnant to our ideas of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs, that the ſenſe of it ſhould be limited. For if a period will ever be put to the joys of heaven, either the ſoul will be annihilated, or reduc'd to a ſtate leſs happy, than that which it enjoy'd before. It does not appear how annihilation can, in a human way of arguing, conſiſt with the wiſdom of God. For why ſhould a wiſe agent, by any particular will, deſtroy his own work; a work capable of ſubſiſting, in virtue of his general will, to all eternity? Or how, again, does it appear more reconcileable with the divine goodneſs, that when God has render'd men capable of being for ever happy; when he has impreſs'd on them continual and invincible deſires to that end; when he has given them expectations of eternal happineſs, ſo far as expectations can be grounded on the obvious and ordinary ſignification of words; and, laſtly, when he has for many ages put them in the poſſeſſion of a happineſs, which nothing but his own arbitrary power can deprive them of, that he ſhould, after all, put a period to it, either wholly, or in part?

BUT, indeed, the terms *eternal*, *everlaſting*, and *for ever*, are not the only terms, from which we infer, that the joys of heaven will never have an end. The bleſſed inhabitants of it are *paſs'd from death unto life*; to life, as oppos'd to death, and all future or poſſible power of it. They have an expreſs promiſe, that *they ſhall never ſee death*[*]; that *there ſhall be no more death*[†]. As theſe promiſes are inconſiſtent with the notion of their being, in any future time, annihilated, or their ceaſing to live; there are other promiſes, which ſecure to them the full and perpetual poſſeſſion of all thoſe pleaſures of life, which they ſhall in heaven enjoy. They are ſaid to have *everlaſting habitations*[‡]; *a continuing city*[**]; *a building of God*; *a houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*[††]; to have an *eternal inheritance*[‡‡]; *an inheritance uncorruptible, undefil'd, and that fadeth not away*[*]. But, inſtead of expatiating in confutation of ſuch falſe and impious notions, it concerns us much rather to conſider, and that is the beſt uſe we can make of our believing a future and everlaſting life, what we ſhall do to enter into it; or how we *may obtain the ſalvation, which is in Jeſus Chriſt, with eternal glory*[†].

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[*] *John* 8. 51.
[†] *Rev.* 21. 4.
[‡] *Luke* 16. 9.
[**] *Heb.* 13. 14.
[††] 2 *Cor.* 5. 1.
[‡‡] *Heb.* 9. 15.
[*] 1 *Pet.* 1. 4.
[†] 2 *Tim.* 2. 10.

SPECU-

SPECULATIVE THEOLOGY.

BOOK V.

Of the Rewards and Puniſhments propos'd in the Old and New Teſtament.

CHAP. I.

Of the rewards and puniſhments propos'd in the Old Teſtament, reſpecting this life, and whether they reſpect this life only.

IT will not be diſputed, that God has a right to be, and that we may therefore piouſly conclude, from his attribute of goodneſs, *he is a rewarder of them who diligently ſeek him.* But he has been pleas'd to confirm an inference, which might ſo juſtly be drawn from this perfection of his nature (not to queſtion how far his juſtice may be concern'd in the preſent argument) by a ſpecial and expreſs ſanction.

The queſtion is, of what nature the rewards propos'd to good men in the Old Teſtament were, reſpecting this life, or wherein they principally conſiſted?

If we conſider what promiſes were made to the Jews under the *Moſaick* diſpenſation, they chiefly conſiſted of temporal bleſſings and enjoyments; with regard to them as a people, in an affluence of all thoſe advantages, which tend to exalt a nation, and make it happy; ſuch as peace and plenty, and to this end, fruitful ſeaſons; the former, and the latter rain; in a time of war, ſucceſs and victory over their enemies. If we ſeverally conſider the perſons who compos'd this community in a private ſtation, the promiſes made to them, gave them particular grounds to hope for length of days; for riches and honours; for the bleſſing of God upon them in their going out and their coming in, in their flocks and their herds, in the fruit of their labours, and every thing they took in hand.

Promises of this kind were the more neceſſary to a people, who, notwithſtanding they in general believ'd a future ſtate; yet, according to the letter of the law, had no expreſs revelation made to them concerning it; at leaſt, the motives to obedience were no where diſtinctly founded upon it.

And it is much more probable this was the reaſon why the promiſes of the law run ſo much on thoſe temporal emoluments of life, than what has been frequently aſſign'd, that ſuch a diſpenſation was more peculiarly adapted to the temper of the Jews, as a people of groſs, dull, and low apprehenſions. There appears to have been from time to time among them perſons of as great capacity and elevation of mind, as in any other nation under heaven. Neither does their hiſtory, in general, repreſent them as a people of more narrow conceptions, or more ſtupid, than the reſt of mankind. It may rather be reaſonably concluded, this prejudice was originally entertain'd by the nations, out of envy to them; becauſe God ſo viſibly, on all occaſions, appear'd in their protection and favour; particularly, in going forth with their armies, in fighting their battels, and giving them the victory. Envy is a natural ſource of malice, as that is of calumny. And it is to this origin we are to aſcribe that noted paſſage of *Tacitus*, where he ſpeaks ſo diſadvantageouſly of the jewiſh people, from a malicious report of the Ægyptians, from whoſe oppreſſion God had, in ſo very ſignal and extraordinary a manner, deliver'd them. If there be at preſent ſomething of the temper imputed to them obſervable among the reſidue of the jewiſh nation, this may be attributed to a judicial blindneſs of mind they are under, in puniſhment of their infidelity; or to their condition, as a ſcatter'd and diſpers'd people; and, for that reaſon, under circumſtances, which are naturally apt to contract and debaſe the minds of men.

But whatever might be the reaſon of God's encouraging the Jews ſo much to obedience, upon the proſpect of temporal rewards, did the promiſes made to them wholly terminate in the bleſſings of this life? Or had they no expectations beyond it grounded on any expreſs authority of the reveal'd will of God?

This is a queſtion, which, for the importance of it, deſerves to be diſtinctly conſider'd. If we take the letter of the covenant, which God was pleas'd to enter into with the Jews, it does not appear expreſſly from any article in it, that he was, by virtue of it, oblig'd to reward their obedience in a future ſtate; that covenant, indeed, being made with them as a nation, a choſen people ſeparated from the reſt of the world, it was highly agreeable to the nature of it, that it ſhould be founded, for that reaſon, on the promiſe of national and worldly bleſſings to them. Yet good men did ſuppoſe a ſpiritual ſenſe contain'd in thoſe promiſes, and, looking upon the bleſſings conſign'd by them as *ſhadows of good things to come*, entertain'd ſtrong and lively hopes from them of a future ſtate. Theſe hopes were confirm'd to them both from the general principles of natural religion, and ſeveral circumſtances peculiar to the diſpenſation they were under.

The covenant which God enter'd into with the Jews, as a peculiar people, did not deſtroy the natural proofs of the ſoul's immortality, which were common to them with the reſt of the world. Neither did it hinder them from obſerving there was a neceſſity, according to the courſe of God's providence in this world, in order to the vindication of his juſtice, that rewards and puniſhments ſhould be diſpens'd to wicked and good men in another life, after a different manner, than they are ſeverally diſpens'd to them in this life.

There were alſo particular reaſons, from the authority of thoſe divine oracles, which were committed to the Jews, and from the tenour of the religion they profeſs'd, to believe a future ſtate of reward to good men.

The account which *Moſes* gives of the creation of man, into whoſe body, after it was form'd out of the duſt of the earth, God *breath'd a living ſoul*, created after his own image, might give them reaſon to conclude, that what had ſo divine an original and reſemblance, could not be, in the nature of it, mortal. They had, in the hiſtorical part of their inſpir'd writings, a ſeries of more remarkable and immediate interpoſitions of divine providence in this world, which tends to render a future ſtate of retribution at leaſt more credible, than any other nation, or rather, ſo far as we are able to judge in the caſe, than all the nations in the world beſides. The tranſlations of *Enoch* and *Elias* gave a ſenſible and peculiar evidence to them of this doctrine. God's declaring that he was a God of particular perſons, of *Abraham,* for inſtance, of *Iſaac*, and of *Jacob*, could not be interpreted in any other ſenſe, than as importing a future ſtate wherein they ſurviv'd; for what can be inferr'd from theſe words, but that God, who had been their God, was, as he declares himſelf, ſtill their God. But to be a God to any one is, both in the language of holy ſcripture, and in the reaſon of the thing, to be a preſerver, a benefactor, and *exceeding rich reward* (for ſo the promiſe was made to *Abraham)* of ſuch a perſon.

What is here ſaid, is only deſign'd as a comment upon that ſtrong, and inconteſtable aſſertion of our Saviour, which, tho' brought in proof of the reſurrection, appears ſtill more forcible, towards proving the ſoul's immortality; *God is not a God of the dead, but of the living.* The promiſe made to the Jews of a mediator, who ſhould reconcile them to God, and deliver them from the curſe of the law, death, by which cannot be underſtood the ſeparation of ſoul and body, for in this ſenſe it was no where promis'd to the Jews, they ſhould not die, but the guilt and miſerable ſtate of a ſinner, with reſpect to his ſoul, whether in the body here, or after the death of the body.

It is particularly upon this conſideration, that our church rejects the doctrine of ſuch men, who pretend the Jews had no expectations from any rewards propos'd to them in the Old Teſtament, but what terminated in this life. *The Old Teſtament is not contrary to the New: For both in the Old and New Teſtament everlaſting life is offer'd to mankind by Chriſt; who is the only mediator between God and man. Wherefore they are not to be heard, which feign that the old fathers did look only for tranſitory promiſes* *.

The puniſhments threatned to the Jews did alſo, in the literal ſignification of them, principally reſpect the ſufferings of this preſent life, and, in general, for the ſame reaſons, upon which temporal rewards were promis'd to them; to render them, whether in their national or private capacities, more obedient to God. We may obſerve therefore, from the events which occur in their hiſtory, they were generally happy or miſerable, according to the good or corrupt ſtate of religion among them. But a greater difficulty ariſes concerning the diſpenſations of providence, with reſpect to particular perſons, under the *Moſaick* diſpenſation, who, tho' entitled to the temporal bleſſings of it, were miſerable; tho' obnoxious to the temporal evils denounc'd againſt ſinners, yet liv'd in great ſplendor and proſperity. Upon this occaſion, it is ask'd, if good men had, by the letter of the law, a fœderal right to the advantages promis'd in it; and wicked men had, by the ſame rule, at once incurr'd the forfeiture of them, and the puniſhment expreſſly threaten'd by the law, what account can be given of the frequent complaints in the inſpir'd writings of the Old Teſtament concerning the promiſcuous diſpenſation of the bleſſings or evils of this life to wicked and good men? How came it to paſs that, contrary to the covenant under which they liv'd, it is repreſented, as if the *wicked flouriſh'd*; as if there was *one event to the righteous and to the wicked*; and *all they were happy who dealt very treacherouſly*.

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* Article 7.

To this it may be ſaid, that what is here obſerv'd concerning the events of providence, was not ſpoken particularly with reſpect to the Jews, but to mankind in general. If theſe paſſages, or any of them, refer to particular perſons among the Jews, it may be farther reply'd, that the impunity of ſinners, and the ſufferings of good men, were only for a ſhort period; that it is conſiſtent with the goodneſs and juſtice of thoſe, who have the power of rewarding or puniſhing in this life, for wiſe reaſons; as, in ſome caſes, to ſuſpend puniſhment; ſo, in others, eſpecially for the greater benefit of the party on whom they are to be conferr'd, to poſtpone rewards; that whatever appearance of wrong there may be in the latter caſe, there is no manner of pretence for it in the former; laſtly, that it was ſufficient, upon the whole matter, to juſtify the divine conduct, according to the tenour of the *Moſaick* covenant, if God ſo diſpos'd the order of things, that in any viſible manner, wickedneſs ſhould bring to a ſinner puniſhment, and innocency to a good man, *peace, at the laſt*.

CHAP. II.

Of the rewards and puniſhments, reſpecting this life, propos'd in the New Teſtament.

GOD had an original right to the obedience of man; and tho' he ſhould never have enforc'd it by the ſanction of rewards or puniſhments, nor ſo much indeed as requir'd it by any poſitive command. The reaſon of our homage and ſervice to him, is evidently founded on his ſovereign authority and dominion over us. Yet becauſe we do not always govern our ſelves by reaſon, or obey that law which he has cauſ'd to be written on the table of every man's heart, but there are other ſprings of action in us, particularly hope and fear, which ſtrongly influence our conduct, and ſometimes determine even againſt reaſon, at other times oblige it to give ſentence in favour of our irregularities; God has thought fit, in order to keep us within the bounds of our duty, and to encourage us more powerfully in well-doing, to direct thoſe paſſions of fear and hope upon their right object; and to render them, in their reſpective operations, more ſubſervient to reaſon, by ſetting happineſs before us, as proper to animate and excite the former; and miſery, as no leſs influential on the latter of them.

SOME, I know, have entertain'd an opinion, that a ſenſe of our duty to God, and the dignity of our own nature, as it is ſufficient to that end, ſo alone ought to lay the foundation of our virtue and obedience, without any manner of regard to our intereſts, preſent or future. If the heathens, ſay they, who ſat in darkneſs and the ſhadow of death, were able to diſcover the truth of this maxim, *virtue is its own reward;* it ſhould, one would think, operate with much greater force upon thoſe, to whom God has declar'd the nature, and the conditions of that obedience, which he requires of them, at once in a clearer light, and by an expreſs law. They ſuppoſe no other arguments can now be neceſſary to ingenuous minds, towards perſuading them to the practice of their duty, but that they ſhould certainly know, (and this no perſons under the chriſtian diſpenſation can pretend ignorance of) what is their duty.

I do not here diſpute what force there may be in this principle to men in a ſtate of perfection, or whether it may not have a conſiderable influence on certain perſons of more noble and exalted minds, even in this imperfect ſtate. I ſhall only obſerve, that the method God has taken to encourage our obedience, and prevent our apoſtaſy or offences againſt him, will have the moſt powerful effect on the generality of men, if not in many caſes upon thoſe, who have naturally the beſt diſpoſitions, or live under the moſt lively and powerful ſenſe, both of their duty, and the dignity of human nature. Every man may examine himſelf, how great or ſtrong ſoever his ideas are of virtue or religion, whether the fear of his being expoſ'd to ſhame, or of his ſuffering on one account or other in his intereſts, or in the eye of the world, has not, on many occaſions, reſtrain'd him from certain ſinful actions, when probably all other reſtraints would have prov'd ineffectual.

SELF-LOVE is not a paſſion criminal in itſelf, or when under due regulations; for then it could not be, as we experience it, neceſſary and invincible. There can be nothing therefore derogatory, either to the wiſdom of God, in propoſing ſuch conſiderations, or to the reaſon of man, in complying with them, as may be proper to direct this principle, and cauſe it to operate the right way. Were it then, in the nature of the thing, repugnant to any principle of religion; the deſire of happineſs, the very deſire of uniting our ſelves to God, and of enjoying him, would be alſo, what I conceive will not be pretended, in itſelf irregular, and offenſive to God. What is, in the nature of it, and under any regulation whatever, ſinful, is neceſſarily ſo, whatever the object of it be, at all times, and in all caſes.

THE main force of the objection appears to lie againſt the fear of puniſhment, as a more ſervile ungenerous motive, and chiefly apt to work on little, or weak minds: And therefore it is obſerv'd, that hope of reward, or deſire of happineſs, has ever been one principal motive of obedience to the greateſt and beſt of men. *David* encourages himſelf and others to the practice of God's commandments, upon this conſideration, that *in keeping of them, there is great reward. Moſes had reſpect to the recompence of reward* *. Our bleſſed Saviour himſelf, *for the joy that was ſet before him, endur'd the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame* †.

BUT granting, for theſe reaſons, the deſire of happineſs, particularly as importing a more intimate union with God, is a true religious motive to obedience; yet certainly we are not to underſtand it in oppoſition to the fear of puniſhment, as if that were an irregular or unjuſt motive to it. A duty ſo much enjoin'd and inſiſted upon throughout the holy ſcriptures, and particularly recommended by *Solomon*, as laying the very foundation of wiſdom, or a religious life ‡; however love or hope might afterwards ſuperſtruct upon it. And accordingly holy *David* himſelf, in whoſe devotions we obſerve the moſt noble, generous, and exalted ſtrains of piety; yet, from an apprehenſion leſt he ſhould at any time offend God, breaks out into this paſſionate addreſs to him; *My fleſh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments* **.

WHATEVER difference there may be in theſe two paſſions of hope and fear, with reſpect to the object of them, they ariſe radically from the ſame cauſe. That very principle which carries us towards good, directs us to avoid ſuch occaſions, as may endanger the loſs of it. And therefore, however a deſire of being happy, or of not being miſerable, may admit of a diſtinct conſideration, the one being in order of our conception, an act of the mind, prior to the other, yet they are originally founded in one common ſubject. If it be ſaid, the excellency of hope lies herein, that it has for its object the favour of God; it may be ſaid, on the other hand, that fear has alſo a like advantage, as it prevents thoſe impieties, which would exclude men from the favour of God. Now ſince both theſe paſſions are proper motives to the obedience of men, and, in their own nature, equally lawful, it was highly agreeable both to the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, to put them reſpectively in motion, by propoſing rewards or puniſhments to men, in conſequence of their good or evil actions.

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* *Heb.* 11. 25. † *Heb.* 12. 2. ‡ *Prov.* 1. 7. ** *Pſal.* 119. 120.

The great queſtion is, whether, according to the terms of the evangelical diſpenſation, there be any ſpecial promiſes, relating to their temporal happineſs, made to good men; or any temporal evils threaten'd to wicked men? The two principal paſſages, in proof of the affirmative, as to the former branch of the queſtion, is that of our Saviour; where he tells his diſciples, that if they firſt *ſeek the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs*, all the external ſupports of life, about which men appear ſo ſollicitous, *ſhould be added unto them*: And that of the apoſtle, where he declares, that *godlineſs hath the promiſe of the life which now is, and of that which is to come*.

To this it is anſwer'd in general, that we are to diſtinguiſh between promiſes made to good men, with reſpect to the neceſſary ſupports of life, and promiſes made to them of any ſpecial bleſſing, as a ſtipulated reward of their obedience, or in conſideration of it. Chriſtians are members of this world, and therefore do not ceaſe, by being Chriſtians, to ſhare in the ordinary and common effects of God's preſerving and governing providence. The general laws of it will ſtill take place, whether men profeſs Chriſtianity or not. And as virtue or goodneſs have a natural tendency in them to recommend men to the favour of God, and entitle them, according to the ordinary courſe of things here, to many temporal bleſſings, there is no reaſon why good men ſhould be excluded the common advantages of piety, tho' ſpiritual rewards are propos'd as the only motives of obedience to them. What we ſay therefore is, that whether Chriſtians be unhappy, or in a proſperous condition, with regard to the life which now is, whether they want or abound, theſe different circumſtances do not depend on any conditions of their chriſtian obedience, ſpecify'd in ſcripture, or belong to them properly as Chriſtians, but are diſpens'd for other wiſe and general reaſons of providence; particularly, as God ſees theſe different ſtates of life, moſt proper to promote their ſpiritual advantage, or, in the final iſſue, to entitle them to the future and glorious rewards of the goſpel. It is by this rule that we are to judge, ſo far as we are capable of making any judgment in the caſe, by all that goes before us, concerning the favour of God towards men. It is not becauſe any promiſe of that kind is made to them in the goſpel, but becauſe God ſees proſperity moſt conducing to their ſpiritual good, the end to which, according to the tenor of the chriſtian diſpenſation, all other deſigns are to give place. The bleſſings therefore or evils of this life, are not to be conſider'd in a phyſical ſenſe, according to the popular notion of them; but are indifferently, or alternately good or evil to Chriſtians, under different circumſtances, or in a different diſpoſition, with reſpect to their ſpiritual ſtate. So that, according to this doctrine, it is ſtrictly true, that *God will withold no good thing from them that lead a godly life*: That is, nothing morally good, or really ſubſervient to their great and true intereſts.

If good Chriſtians then are in a proſperous ſtate, this does not ariſe from any fœderal right they have to the advantages of ſuch a ſtate, but from an accidental diſpoſition they are in to improve the means of grace, under ſuch circumſtances, or to other reaſons of providence, which either concern them in common with the reſt of mankind, or if, as Chriſtians, in regard to the occaſional tendency they may have towards their ſpiritual improvement. Upon this conſideration, the reaſons are perfectly of equal force and evidence, that *the brother of low degree* ſhould *rejoice, in that he is exalted; and the rich, in that he is made low*[*].

If we conſider ſeveral paſſages in the goſpel, they ſeem rather to imply, that Chriſtianity is a ſtate of ſuffering and poverty. The doctrines of the croſs, of ſelf-denyal, and mortification, in a manner peculiar to it, are inculcated as primary doctrines of it. There are many expreſſions, which ſeem to bear hard on rich men, and rather to determine in favour of a poor and afflicted ſtate. If we conſider the example of *Chriſt* himſelf, it rather tends to recommend ſuch a ſtate; if we conſider what he did in favour of thoſe diſciples, who had left all to follow him, we do not find that he procur'd them any ſettlements, any poſts of advantage or honour in this life, or gave them the leaſt expectations that way; but he liv'd with them after a plain, homely, and ſimple manner; and when he dy'd, left them defenceleſs and expos'd in a world not much inclin'd to favour or encourage them. Yet we own there is a wide difference between the ſtate of Chriſtians at this time, when

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[*] *James* i. 9, 10.

Chriſtianity is eſtabliſh'd by the laws of nations, from what it was in the infancy of it. But this difference is only accidental, and does not ariſe from the nature of the chriſtian religion, but the different circumſtances which Chriſtians, by the good providence of God, are now in. The rules whereby Chriſtians were then to conduct themſelves, and which oblig'd them to prefer a paſſive ſtate to all the advantages of this world, are ſtill equally obligatory, ſhould God think fit to permit the ſame perſecution againſt the truth.

I ſhall but urge one argument more to ſhew, that there are no ſpecial temporal bleſſings promis'd to Chriſtians in this life, and that is from the very nature and genius of the chriſtian religion. It is ſaid expreſſly, *Chriſt* is the *mediator of a better covenant, eſtabliſh'd upon better promiſes* *. Which words, if they do not exclude, in the reaſon of them, all temporal rewards to Chriſtians, as a condition of this covenant, on God's part; yet ſo far at leaſt they neceſſarily imply, that ſuch promiſes, if there be really any relating to the preſent life, are to be underſtood with this reſtriction, that the accompliſhment of them ſhall be ſubſervient to the great and principal deſign of the covenant. And it being known only to God, whether that deſign would be better anſwer'd, by our being in a proſperous or an afflicted condition, he only can judge which of thoſe conditions is more fit for us; and the promiſe is to take place, or be ſuſpended, according to that judgment. But there are, indeed, other texts, which ſpeak of the temporal bleſſings of this life after a manner, that ſeems directly to exclude them, as any part of the condition God has oblig'd himſelf to. We are commanded to *ſet our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth;—Not to look for the the things which are ſeen, but the things which are not ſeen.* Here the future rewards are ſet in direct oppoſition to the preſent advantages of life; which, according to the letter of the texts, are expreſſly excluded, but however import ſuch a ſubordination to the great end of our calling, as renders them indifferently means or no means, in order to it, according to the good or ill uſe we make of them.

After all, if we examine the two texts above cited diſtinctly, it does not appear from them, that there are any temporal promiſes made to Chriſtians in this life. The words of our Saviour were not ſpoken to Chriſtians in general, but to his diſciples †; whom he therefore charges to *take no thought what they ſhould eat, or what they ſhould drink, or wherewith they ſhould be cloathed*; it was neceſſary, in order to the diſcharge of their office, that they ſhould have had a promiſe of a ſpecial and extraordinary ſupport. The promiſe which godlineſs is ſaid to have of the life that now is, may refer to the inward ſupports of God's grace, or his ſpecial interpoſition in favour of thoſe who are employ'd by him in executing any great deſign of his providence: *For therefore*, adds the apoſtle, *we both labour and ſuffer reproach, becauſe we truſt in the living God* *. From whence it follows, that except labour and reproach are to be number'd among the bleſſings of life, by the promiſe of the life that now is, we are to underſtand the inward conſolations of grace, or extraordinary ſupports of providence to good men, in extraordinary caſes. Or if the apoſtle meant any temporal advantages in other reſpects, they are not ſuch as ariſe from the nature and condition of the chriſtian diſpenſation, but from the natural tendency of godlineſs and virtue to our preſent happineſs, where they have their proper effect; which it is very conſiſtent with the wiſdom and goodneſs of divine providence, to believe, they ſhould have, on many occaſions.

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* *Heb.* 8. 6. † *Matt.* 16. 25, 34.

For theſe reaſons, I cannot, with all due ſubmiſſion, (tho' ſeveral learned and pious men have taken this method) think it of any great ſervice to Chriſtianity, to inſiſt ſo much on the temporal advantages of being religious. The deſign of Chriſtianity is rather to draw off our thoughts and affections from this world; to remind us that we have now much greater things in expectation; that we are here *ſtrangers* and *pilgrims, looking for a better countrey.* Beſides, it is not, perhaps, true in fact, that Chriſtians are generally happy or miſerable in this world, according to the different circumſtances they are in, as to their ſpiritual ſtate. Neither ſhall we receive much better light into this argument, by appealing to experience whether we conſider ſome of the moſt conſpicuous examples of virtue, or of vice in the world. If men of a diſtinguiſh'd piety enjoy all the viſible advantages of this life, men of the moſt profligate manners, who live without God in the world, are ſometimes obſerv'd not to be inferior to them in that reſpect. The obſervation holds ſtill true; *As is the good, ſo is the ſinner; and he that ſweareth, as he that feareth an oath* †.

This doctrine has alſo ill effects; for good men being encourag'd with the promiſe of temporal bleſſings, and finding themſelves, on the other hand, under great difficulties or diſtreſs, and ſometimes for that very reaſon, becauſe they act upon a principle of conſcience, they are apt to conclude, either they are not ſincerely good, or to ſuſpect the faithfulneſs of God, who is repreſented as making promiſes, which they do not obſerve the accompliſhment of; and in conſequence, perhaps, are tempted to ſuſpect the truth of Chriſtianity in general. If men only intend that moral virtue has a natural tendency to promote the preſent happineſs of life, they are certainly right: But if they would inſinuate, that the practice of piety gives Chriſtians any fœderal or covenanted claim to temporal bleſſings, nothing can be more contrary to the expreſs declarations of ſcripture, to the example of our Lord, to the nature of the new covenant, or to common obſervation.

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* 1 *Tim.* 4. 10. † *Eccleſ.* 9. 2.

The reaſons to ſhew, why no temporal puniſhments are threatned in the goſpel to Chriſtians, as ſuch, will in general appear from what has been ſaid relating to the temporal advantages of life. That God, in the courſe of his providence, does bring many temporal calamities upon wicked men; and that ſometimes he makes himſelf here known, by the judgments which he executes on certain notorious offenders, may be allow'd; tho' there is nothing wherein we ought to be more cautious, than in interpreting his judgments, ſince we know ſo little, either concerning the deſigns of providence, or the hearts of men; and are therefore commanded *not to judge our brother; not to judge according to appearance, but to judge righteous judgment.* This does not hinder but that the civil magiſtrate may proceed to puniſh delinquents in the ſtate, or ſuch as appear to be ſo; becauſe the rule of his acting is the publick good; and therefore, tho' he does not infallibly know the hearts of men, he knows, whatever their intention was, that the faults for which he pronounces ſentence againſt them, if they ſhould be ſuffer'd to eſcape with impunity, muſt neceſſarily be attended with conſequences pernicious to the ſtate. But whether wicked men profeſſing Chriſtianity, ſuffer by the hands of the civil magiſtrate, or according to the ordinary and natural effects of their wickedneſs, they ſuffer as wicked men, as comprehended in the general ſcheme of providence, and not by virtue of any intermination peculiar to them as Chriſtians. The judgment inflicted on the *Corinthians* for partaking after ſo profane a manner of the Lord's ſupper, was extraordinary, and whereof we do not now diſcover any like effects. But when we ſay, God has not made any expreſs interminations of temporal evils in this life to Chriſtians, we are far from ſaying he has excluded himſelf from interpoſing, in particular caſes, to inflict temporal evils on them, or in conſequence of the general laws, whether of his grace or providence. Beſides, that thoſe judgments, except where death was inflicted, which God may inflict when, and by what methods he pleaſes, were not properly puniſhments, but deſign'd as medicinal, and ſalutary chaſtiſements *.

WHATEVER grounds there may be for believing temporal bleſſings promis'd, or temporal evils threaten'd to Chriſtians in this life, there are ſome promiſes made to them in the goſpel, which, tho', in a ſtrict ſenſe, they cannot be term'd temporal, yet may here not improperly be conſider'd, as reſpecting their preſent ſtate. The promiſe of an inward principle of grace, is very expreſs in the chriſtian revelation, and ſtill concerning a greater meaſure of it to thoſe, who make a due uſe or improvement of the talents already committed to them. But having before treated of the excellency of the new covenant in this reſpect, and as to the diſtinction of a common and ſpecial grace, I ſhall not here reſume either of thoſe ſubjects; it is ſufficient to ſay in general, that there is a wide difference between a covenated right to a divine ſupernatural aſſiſtance, or to an expreſs promiſe, that we ſhall *never be tempted above what we are able*; that *God will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it*; and that *to him who hath ſhall be given more in abundance*. And the arguments which we form to ſhew the reaſonableneſs of a ſufficient common grace diſpens'd to all men, which will leave them upon a failure in their duty *without excuſe*. There are alſo puniſhments denounc'd in the goſpel reſpecting this life, of a nature properly ſpiritual: I have mention'd the power of the keys to this end; but God does alſo interpoſe, by immediate acts of his will, in withdrawing the aids of his grace from wicked men, or in giving them up, after a long habitual obſtinacy in ſin or error, to a judicial blindneſs of mind, or hardneſs of heart. In the former reſpect, God is ſaid to ſend men a *ſpirit of ſlumber*, a *ſpirit of deluſion, that they ſhould believe a lye* †. In the latter, that it is impoſſible for thoſe, *who were once enlighten'd, and had taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they ſhall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance* ‡. There is no difficulty in explaining this text, if we ſuppoſe there are ſome ſins of ſo heinous a nature, among which it is reaſonable to reckon apoſtaſy, or a publick denial of the truth, that no penance ought to be appointed in the church towards reconciling thoſe who are found guilty of them. But as this opinion appears to be too rigid; as it was never, on any occaſion, admitted by the latin church; as pardon of ſin is promis'd in the goſpel to all true penitents, without diſtinction; and God only knows when a ſinner is fallen into ſuch an incorrigible ſtate, out of which there are no ordinary methods left for his recovery: It ſeems much more reaſonable to explain the words, not as relating to any power or diſcipline of the church, but to the natural impoſſibility apoſtates were under of reſtoring themſelves to the favour of God, or of exerciſing any true act of repentance, without ſuch an extraordinary meaſure of his grace, which, according to the tenor of the evangelical diſpenſation, they had no right to expect, but rather had great reaſon to fear would be withholden from them. For if neither the baptiſmal efficacy *, nor the ſenſible and ſtrong operations of the Holy Spirit upon their minds, were ſufficient to prevent their falling, how could it be poſſible for them, that, when fallen, when they were juſtly depriv'd of thoſe aſſiſtances, to reſtore themſelves again to their former ſtate. If we explain the words in this ſenſe, there is no neceſſity of rendring the original word † impoſſible, by extremely difficult; for the words are true, with reſpect to the condition of ſuch perſons, in the moſt ſtrict and literal ſenſe. To the ſame effect, when the apoſtle exhorts the jewiſh converts to take care, *leſt any of them ſhould be harden'd through the deceitfulneſs of ſin* ‡; he plainly ſuppoſes that ſinners may provoke God by degrees to give them up to an incorrigible obduracy of heart: Yet becauſe, it is to be hop'd, this caſe, as to the judicial proceedings of God againſt ſinners, does not ordinarily occur; becauſe it is ſomewhat difficult for a ſinner to know when it is really his own caſe; becauſe every deſire of reſtoring himſelf to the favour of God, and every endeavour to this end, is one good evidence that this is not his own caſe; he ought not, while he finds any good diſpoſitions in himſelf, to deſpond, but ſtill to hope that God, of his great mercy, if he do what is incumbent on his part, *will make a way for him to eſcape.*

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* 1 *Cor.* 11. 31, 32.

† 2 *Theſſ.* 1. 10.

‡ *Heb.* 6. 4, 5, 6.

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* I refer here to a known explication of the original word φωτισθέντας, as ſignifying perſons baptiz'd.

† Ἀδύνατον.

‡ *Heb.* 3. 13.

Chap.

Chap. III.

Whether the civil magiſtrate has a power of propoſing rewards and puniſhments to men, on any other account, than as they are members of civil ſociety?

There appears to be the greater difficulty in reſolving this queſtion, becauſe the civil magiſtrate, at the ſame time he acts in that capacity, is ſuppos'd to have a zeal for the religion he profeſſes, which will incline him to promote the growth of it, by all juſt and proper methods. And how can there be a more reaſonable occaſion of employing the power, or the intereſt which his ſtation gives him, than in contributing to ſo good and deſirable an end, and withal, ſo beneficial to the community, over which he preſides.

A civil magiſtrate, when he becomes a chriſtian, does not loſe any right, which he had antecedently to his being a chriſtian. If he were then inveſted with a right to reward or puniſh men for acting in conformity to, or againſt the principles of natural religion, he has ſtill a power, and, for the ſame reaſon, of rewarding or puniſhing men for acting in conformity to, or againſt the principles of reveal'd religion. For what is it that authorizes the magiſtrate, as to the former caſe, to execute his office alternately in both theſe reſpects, but becauſe it is neceſſary to the peace and happineſs of ſociety, that a ſenſe of natural religion ſhould be preſerv'd, by all proper methods, in the minds of men. If it be found then neceſſary to the good of ſociety, that the principles of reveal'd religion ſhould be publickly profeſs'd, or men be oblig'd, in a ſolemn manner, to declare their aſſent to them, the civil magiſtrate may as lawfully require ſuch aſſent to thoſe principles, and under the ſame penalties, as he can require (what certainly on occaſion he may do) the aſſent of men to the principles of natural religion. It is not merely becauſe ſuch principles are in themſelves true, that gives him authority in the caſe, but becauſe the common intereſts of ſociety cannot be preſerv'd, unleſs the truth of them be maintain'd, and his power, when it is requiſite, employ'd to that end.

What is the reaſon, for inſtance, that the magiſtrate has authority to *ſmite the ſcorner*, but becauſe, if religion be once expos'd with impunity to open contempt, whatever care is taken by penal laws to ſuppreſs immorality, they will, in great meaſure, loſe their effect; as men will naturally grow in proportion, as they are leſs influenc'd by the awe of a Deity, more profligate and corrupt in their manners. It is for this reaſon that the magiſtrate has a juſt and indiſputable right of calling the ſcorner to account; and not merely becauſe he profeſſes a ſpeculative error, however impious in itſelf. For if the magiſtrate had a power of ſmiting him for his error, as ſuch, and without any regard to the intereſts of ſociety, he would equally have a power of ſmiting men for any error, whether the intereſts of ſociety might be affected with it or not. And if the magiſtrate be fully convinc'd, that the profeſſion of Chriſtianity is neceſſary towards promoting all the good and beneficial ends of government, or that without obliging men to declare an explicit aſſent to certain chriſtian doctrines, Chriſtianity itſelf cannot be well preſerv'd; he may ſmite the unbeliever in either caſe, with equal juſtice, as he ſmites the ſcorner, and for the ſame political reaſon.

It may, perhaps, be ſaid, we ought to put a material difference between an unbeliever, and a ſcorner; that the principles of natural religion are in themſelves more evident, as depending on the intrinſick nature and reaſon of things, than the principles of reveal'd religion, which are deduc'd from certain paſſages of ſcripture, the ſenſe whereof may be, and has, perhaps, been much controverted; and that as the magiſtrate therefore may be more liable to be miſtaken in the latter reſpect, it is not reaſonable that he ſhould have an equal power of giving the civil ſanction to any doctrine, as in the former reſpect.

All we can infer from hence, is, that the magiſtrate, where there is leſs evidence for the doctrine he would eſtabliſh, ought to proceed with more caution, and to inform himſelf carefully, both in relation to the truth of it, and the ſubſerviency it may have, when eſtabliſh'd towards promoting the common happineſs. This is the rule, whereby the magiſtrate is to act in all his eſtabliſhments, and in applying the temporal influences of this life, whether as to reward or puniſhment, towards enforcing them; without regard to the real ſcruples, or pretended ſcrupulous conſciences of private men.

I ſhall here beg leave to tranſcribe what I have ſaid on a former occaſion, relating to this matter, and before I could have an eye to the preſent ſtate of the controverſy about it.

“ In all caſes, how far men, upon a pretence of conſcience, may be tolerated in a falſe doctrine or worſhip, is not ſo much a conſideration of charity, or, to ſpeak the common dialect, of *moderation*, as of wiſdom and prudence. The magiſtrate is to preſerve the peace and tranquillity of the ſtate. If this cannot be done without putting perſons, who, upon good grounds, are thought dangerous to the ſtate, *(as profeſſing any dangerous principles)* under wholſome or convenient reſtraints; the magiſtrate is oblig'd, from the very nature and end of his office, to lay ſuch reſtraints upon them; becauſe his principal care (and to which all private regards muſt give place) is, that the common wealth may receive no harm. He ought, however, to deal impartially with himſelf in the caſe, and not to make uſe of any colours, or ſpecious pretences of publick good, to authorize violence and oppreſſion; but proceed with great cautition and tenderneſs, and never diſturb any perſon in his civil or religious rights or liberties, where there are not very reaſonable and ſtrong preſumptions, that either in themſelves, or in their natural and ordinary conſequences, they may tend to the diſturbance of the ſtate.

“I add in their natural and ordinary conſequences; becauſe the magiſtrate is not only to ſuppreſs preſent and open diſorders, but to provide againſt probable or imminent dangers.

I obſerve afterwards, “that tho' perhaps the conſequences which we charge upon the principles or party zeal of men, may not neceſſarily flow from them; yet if they be ſuch as, from the natural tendency of things, may very probably flow from them, then the magiſtrate has good and ſufficient cauſe to prevent any ill effects of them.

“As, for inſtance, when thoſe principles which naturally lead to ſubvert all order and government in the ſtate, are openly advanc'd and juſtify'd; or when the meaſures formerly taken in purſuance of ſuch principles, and which actually involv'd the ſtate in the utmoſt confuſion and diſorder, are not only excus'd, but publickly juſtify'd; not here and there by ſome known and popular advocates of the cauſe, but by a numerous party; and when their very number is made uſe of as an argument to render them more formidable to the ſtate; in this caſe, how much ſoever the magiſtrate may be inclin'd to acts of goodneſs and mercy; yet if he be a wiſe, or rather, if he be not a very weak governor, he will think it convenient to guard with all proper and convenient laws, againſt the principles or deſigns of ſuch men: And if he do not find it neceſſary, as he ought not, where the neceſſity is not very viſible and apparent to *ſmite* them; yet it muſt be granted the moſt reaſonable thing in the world, that they ſhould be ty'd ſo far up, as never to have the ſame, or the like occaſion again of *ſmiting* him.

“ What therefore is incumbent on the magiſtrate, is to judge, “ (and to judge as he will anſwer it to his own conſcience) whether the umbrage that any body or ſociety of men may give “ the ſtate, under a pretence for liberty of conſcience, be really “ ſuch as endangers it; and he is to proceed with the greater ſeverity or indulgence accordingly *.

But with what caution and tenderneſs ſoever the magiſtrate may proceed; whether the doctrines of natural, or of reveal'd religion be more evident, or appear in a clearer light to him; yet, if he finds it neceſſary to the publick, that certain doctrines, in either reſpect, ſhould be publickly profeſs'd or maintain'd, he is under an equal obligation, from the nature of his offices, to enforce the profeſſion, or ſupport the eſtabliſhment of them by civil ſanctions. The general reaſon of his authority is ſtill the ſame, and does not depend on the different degrees of evidence, as to moral or reveal'd doctrines, but on the tendency of them to the peace or happineſs of ſociety, which may be ſometimes greater in reſpect to doctrines leſs evident; but the evidence whereof may, notwithſtanding, be ſufficient to juſtify the eſtabliſhment of them. I argue here upon a ſuppoſition, which ought not, perhaps, to be made, that the principles of natural religion are founded upon a more clear and inconteſtable evidence, than the doctrines or inſtitutions of reveal'd religion.

Where the magiſtrate therefore has grounds to believe, that when men are publickly ſuffer'd to oppoſe ſuch and ſuch doctrines, or that, if they be not oblig'd, by virtue of ſome publick Teſt, to profeſs them, the peace of the ſtate muſt neceſſarily be much endanger'd; or if it be found by experience, that ſuch doctrines, as he thinks fit to ſuppreſs, have formerly prov'd deſtructive to the peace of it; that they are oppoſite to the genius of the people under his government; or tend, in their natural conſequences, to embroil his adminiſtration, if not to ſubvert all government; certainly it is lawful for ſuch a magiſtrate, if he will purſue the ends of the truſt repos'd in him, to ſuppreſs ſuch principles, as to ſuppreſs vice or immorality. The ſins or errors of men being perfectly indifferent to him, as acting in the capacity of a civil magiſtrate, ſetting aſide the ends of civil government.

I deſire it may be obſerv'd, that I here only ſuppoſe the magiſtrate inveſted with a power alternately of enforcing or ſuppreſſing any ſuch doctrine, as has ſome viſible and immediate relation to the good or prejudice of the ſtate. As to ſpeculative errors, the nature or tendency whereof cannot be preſum'd to affect it, he is

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* Serm. vol. 2. p. 54, 55, 56.

not oblig'd to interpoſe his authority; all we contend for is, that the magiſtrate, from the nature of his office, ought to take cognizance of ſuch doctrines, whether true or falſe, that directly, or by neceſſary conſequence, concern him as a magiſtrate.

If it be ſaid, that the magiſtrate is not only fallible, but may ſometimes profeſs a falſe religion, and think it for the intereſt of the ſtate that his ſubjects ſhould do ſo too; by which means, if we allow him a right to encourage or ſuppreſs any ſpeculative doctrines, the true religion may be in time extirpated. This, we ſay, is a conſequence, which does not ariſe from the nature of the truſt repoſed in the magiſtrate, but from an accidental abuſe of it: It cannot be argued, that becauſe a power may be, in certain caſes, miſapply'd, it cannot therefore be juſtly claim'd or exercis'd in any caſe.

If this way of arguing, from the fallibility of the magiſtrate, or the conſequential effects of it, ſhould hold good, we may conclude, for the ſame reaſon, that there ought to be no publick courts of human judicature, none, eſpecially, where the laſt appeal in any cauſe ought to lie; or that the magiſtrate ought not, in any caſe, to interpoſe by his power, *for the puniſhment of evil doers, and for the praiſe of them that do well:* Becauſe it may happen that a falſe judgment may be given, even in the laſt reſort of a judicial proceſs; or that the magiſtrate may ſo far err, as to confound, in certain caſes, the diſtinction of right and wrong; may *call evil good, and good evil; put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter.* In this caſe, where the magiſtrate happens to err in the ſimplicity of his heart, there is no remedy; he muſt follow the light and dictates of his conſcience, tho' erroneous. But, for the ſame reaſon, whatever inconveniences the people committed to his charge, may, by this means, be expos'd to on other accounts, they ought not to comply with any eſtabliſhments in prejudice of the truth, againſt their conſciences. Should it be pretended, that the ends of civil government abſolutely require wicked men ſhould be puniſh'd, and good men, at leaſt, encourag'd; this very pretence implies a tacit conceſſion, that the fallibility of the magiſtrate ought not to be objected, againſt his having a power, in general, of rewarding or puniſhing men; but only in ſuch caſes, where the ends of government do not require, they ſhould be rewarded or puniſh'd.

The encouragement therefore which the civil magiſtrate gives to men, who profeſs the eſtabliſh'd religion, and his excluding (if that may properly be call'd a puniſhment) perſons, who oppoſe either the general truth, or particular doctrines of it, from certain common privileges or offices in the ſtate, is founded in the ſame reaſon.

The religion eſtabliſh'd in any nation by the laws, is ſuppos'd, at once, moſt agreeable, except where ſome violent or indirect methods have been taken for its eſtabliſhment, to the ſenſe of ſuch a nation, and upon reaſonable grounds, to ſupply a fit number of men of the beſt principles, and the greateſt probity, for the publick ſervice.

Now it concerns the ſupreme magiſtrate in every government, to put the ſeveral powers, whereby it is to be adminiſter'd, into the hands of perſons, in whoſe integrity, upon all accounts, he may naturally repoſe the moſt confidence: And to keep others out of poſts, whether of profit or truſt, whoſe principles render their fidelity more ſuſpected, or are leſs conſiſtent with the nature of the conſtitution, under which they live; eſpecially where they have never fail'd, when they had the power in their hands, to abuſe it. For it is neceſſary, in the reaſon of the thing, or elſe there can be no reaſoning from the nature of any thing, that a government, where Chriſtianity is profeſs'd and eſtabliſh'd, ſhould *have a power of enacting laws, for the preſervation of publick peace, both in church and ſtate*; and where there has been any former notorious abuſe of power, *to prevent the like miſchiefs for the future* *.

Where the ſtate acts upon theſe, or the like conſiderations, there is no more ground to complain of perſecution, than where ſhe excludes men from civil offices on any other juſt account, or by reaſon of their incapacity, whether natural or political, to ſerve her.

If men who declare againſt the truth of the eſtabliſh'd religion, or againſt any particular fundamental doctrines of it; who condemn the terms of her communion, as directly ſinful; and, at the ſame time, can occaſionally communicate with her, in compliance with thoſe very terms; who deny thoſe orders, or that diſcipline, without which there can be no true chriſtian church, as having no true miniſtry, or true ſacraments; who therefore act upon ſuch ſchemes, as have a tendency, in the event, to explode the very profeſſion itſelf of Chriſtianity out of the world; if ſuch men may be qualify'd for any offices of conſequence in the ſtate; either it muſt be ſaid, that the ſtate has not a right to take thoſe methods, which are moſt proper for its own preſervation and defence; or that it is of no importance to theſe ends, whether any particular doctrines of Chriſtianity, whether Chriſtianity itſelf, be preſerv'd or aboliſh'd.

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* I refer here to the reaſons ſpecify'd in the preamble to the Corporation act.

We grant a due tenderneſs ſhould be had to perſons of ſcrupulous conſciences; and that no man ought to ſuffer, or be perſecuted merely upon that account: But there is a wide difference between perſecuting men for their principles, and guarding, by wholſome laws and precautions, againſt the return of a perſecution which themſelves had formerly rais'd; and who, ſo long as they retain the ſame principles, muſt naturally be ſuppos'd, whenever they have any power to that end, to purſue the ſame meaſures.

It is not merely upon account of their differing from us, as to certain religious doctrines, that the penal laws againſt the Papiſts are enacted; the ſeverity of them could never be juſtify'd, according to our own principles, upon that foot only; but it is becauſe they profeſs doctrines inconſiſtent with the peace, with the ſafety and honour, with the very nature of the eſtabliſh'd government, as a ſovereign and independent government. If mere difference in religion would authorize us, and for that reaſon only, to put thoſe who diſſent from us under certain legal reſtraints, it would authorize us to do ſo in all caſes, and in reſpect to all perſons, whether Papiſts or Proteſtants. The reaſon therefore of ſuch legal reſtraints, is not founded in the different principles of religion, as ſuch, which men profeſs, but in the tendency they have to diſturb or unſettle the civil eſtabliſhment. Where that tendency is obſervable, where the effects of it, if not timely prevented, will, in all probability, follow; the civil magiſtrate has the ſame authority in the caſe over all perſons, from the nature of the thing, whatever names of diſtinction they give themſelves, or affect to be call'd by.

But does not this power of the magiſtrate, which we contend for, deſtroy the natural and inalienable rights of mankind? Why, for inſtance, ſhould the members of a ſociety, the very deſign whereof is to aſſure to them all their juſt and reaſonable claims, be excluded from ſharing the common privileges of it? Theſe are queſtions, however they may have an appearance of popularity, yet really in themſelves very trifling and inſignificant. For the nature of ſociety ſuppoſes, that men, by entring into it, do, for that reaſon, recede from certain natural rights, which antecedently belong'd to them. In a ſtate of nature, liberty and independency are rights of all mankind; but ſociety, which ſuppoſes government, abſolutely deſtroys, except in the perſon of a Prince, who is abſolute, this latter right, and, in many reſpects, the former of them. Without a ceſſion, indeed, of our natural rights, in many caſes it is impoſſible to conceive, how any regular ſociety ſhould be founded; or how it can ſubſiſt, without a ceſſion of them, in all caſes, where the publick good or ſafety require it.

If ſociety were diſſolv'd, every man would have an equal right to the produce and fruits of the earth, or to any thing, which he could firſt lay his hands on; there could be no ſuperior claim in ſuch a ſtate to power, to riches, or honour: But ſociety being once form'd, the different circumſtances of its members, in theſe reſpects, neceſſarily reſult from it, by virtue of certain poſitive laws, which are by common conſent ſubmitted to. And therefore, it is much more proper to ſay, men have a political, than a natural right to any privilege, or advantagious poſt in the ſtate. How far, or with what limitations, men may be entitled to ſuch a right, or be excluded from it, the ſtate is ſolely to judge. It is upon this principle, that ſome men have a right to be elected repreſentatives of the people, ſome to elect them, while others, according to the laws of the conſtitution, are diſqualify'd from ſerving the publick, in both theſe reſpects.

And if the ſtate is to judge what perſons are beſt qualify'd to ſerve it, in the judgment it makes, regard is not to be had ſo much to their natural, as their ſocial qualifications. The moſt reaſonable pretence, upon which a natural right of ſerving the ſtate, in any ſuperior poſt, can be claim'd, is that of a fine natural capacity; and yet where this is found in perſons, whoſe probity or zeal for the true intereſts of the ſtate, if juſtly ſuſpected, is ſo far from recommending them to the ſtate for ſuch a poſt, that it is a very good argument why they ſhould not be entruſted with it.

It is of no conſequence to object here againſt any diſqualifications, by authority of the ſtate, relating to religious doctrines, that the church being a ſpiritual ſociety, the members of it ought only to be govern'd by ſuch laws or conſiderations, as are purely of a ſpiritual nature. We grant this true, in relation to the church, under the notion of a diſtinct ſociety, inveſted with certain powers that are not deriv'd from the ſtate; yet as the members of the church, are at the ſame time members of the ſtate; as we cannot, in fact, ſeparate the man from the chriſtian, whatever we may do notionally, or in the abſtract, the ſtate has an unqueſtionable right to eſtabliſh ſuch principles by civil ſanctions, as have a natural or neceſſary tendency to preſerve the peace and promote the intereſts of it. It being admitted, for inſtance, that Chriſtianity is the beſt and moſt beneficial inſtitution in the world, with reſpect to all the ends of civil government, the ſtate may very juſtly preclude all ſuch perſons, who would decry this inſtitution, and introduce atheiſm or deiſm in the room of it, from having any ſhare in the civil adminiſtration.

For the ſame reaſon, ſuch particular doctrines of Chriſtianity, as are eſſential to the being, or neceſſary to the preſervation of it, or which tend more effectually to eſtabliſh the authority of the magiſtrate, and enforce the ſubject's obedience to him, ought to be guarded with the like precaution, whether in favour of thoſe, who aſſert ſuch doctrines, or to the excluſion of others, who oppoſe and endeavour to explode them.

THE argument from the fallibility of the magiſtrate, would hold equally good, in both theſe caſes. And if there be any weight in it, no man can poſſibly ſhew, that the civil magiſtrate has a better right (and this right, I conceive, will not be deny'd him) to prevent, by any penal law, the abolition of Chriſtianity, than the abolition of ſuch doctrines, as are either eſſential to the preſervation of it, or, in the nature of them, ſubſervient to the real and primary intereſts of the ſtate.

THE pretence, that the hearts of men are known only to God, and that no man ought to ſuffer upon a principle of ſincerity or conſcience, is here of no force. The civil magiſtrate is to judge by the beſt evidence he can come at, whether the principles of men really tend to the prejudice of ſociety, and he is to proceed in his penal ſanctions accordingly. Whether men profeſs ſuch principles from a ſecret or ſincere conviction of their truth, is out of the queſtion, as to him. Upon a ſuppoſition, that the true motives upon which men act, could certainly be known to him, he would be oblig'd to purſue the ends of his office, and conſult the publick good; and therefore, his not knowing them, cannot be an argument againſt his taking ſuch meaſures, as really tend to promote the publick good. The ſincerity, or inſincerity of men, is of no conſequence, in this caſe, to the rule of his acting, but muſt be judg'd at another tribunal.

UPON the whole matter, in anſwer to the enquiry originally propos'd, we may form this reſolution; that, tho' the civil magiſtrate has, and ought to have, a power of propoſing rewards and puniſhments to men; yet this power is properly exercis'd with reſpect to them, as they are members of civil ſociety; and only indirectly, or by conſequence, as they are Chriſtians.

CHAP.

Chap. IV.

Of the future rewards propos'd in the Goſpel.

I Shall have the leſs occaſion to inſiſt here, either concerning the nature, or the duration of that happineſs, which is prepar'd for good men in heaven; having, under the laſt article of the creed, *life everlaſting*, ſaid what may be ſufficient for our general information upon both theſe heads. It may not, however, be improper in this place to conſider a little, after a more particular manner, wherein the nature of thoſe evangelical rewards, which are promis'd to the faithful after this life, will principally conſiſt.

The two great faculties of a human ſoul, when, for the ſake of method or diſtinction, we reaſon ſeparately upon them, are thoſe of underſtanding and will. Now the happineſs of every being conſiſts in uniting itſelf to ſuch objects, as are moſt agreeable to its nature, and perfective of it. This truth is ſo evident, that it needs not be prov'd; and the conſequence is no leſs clear, that the happineſs of man muſt therefore conſiſt in his knowledge of thoſe things, which are moſt worthy to be known, and in his union to ſuch things, as are moſt worthy to be choſen. When he is poſſeſs'd of this happineſs; when his mind is enlighten'd with a view of the moſt excellent truths, and his heart fill'd and enlarg'd with the enjoyment of the greateſt good, then he will be as happy, as his utmoſt wiſhes and deſires and capacities can make him.

The promiſe of a future happineſs, in both theſe reſpects, to Chriſtians, is founded upon an expreſs and divine authority. We are aſſur'd, with reſpect to the former branch of it, that the faithful, after this life, ſhall *ſee God as he is* [*]: For *we now ſee through a glaſs darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then ſhall we know, even alſo as we are known* [†]. *There ſhall be no night* in that luminous and bleſſed region of truth; it ſhall not be obſcur'd by means of ignorance or error; *neither need they any candle*, any ſuch poor helps of argumentation or diſcourſe, towards improving their knowledge as men are forc'd to employ, and frequently to very little effect here; which yet are ſo diſcouraging to the generality of mankind, in their ſearch after truth, that few perſons purſue her with that aſſiduity and application, which are neceſſary to bring them to the place of her reſidence. *But the Lord giveth them*, the bleſſed above, *light* *; and at the ſame time opens and invigorates their minds to receive it.

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[*] 1 *John* 3. 2.

[†] 1 *Cor.* 13. 12.

Now if the diſcovery of ſome metaphyſical, or perhaps leſs important truth in natural philoſophy, or the mathematicks, is ſometimes able, eſpecially after a long and intenſe lucubration, to fill the mind of a man with ſo tranſporting a joy, and to raiſe him ſo much above himſelf, that he is inſenſible to all other impreſſions, and ſcarce knows, perhaps, whether he poſſeſs the object of his deſire in the body, or out of the body; if the diſcovery of any one truth here, more or leſs important, is able to produce ſuch ſtrong and ſenſible effects; how happy and deſirable muſt that ſtate be, wherein the rays of truth ſhall ſpread themſelves over our minds, not by a ſlow and gradual motion, according to the advances we here make in knowledge, but by a direct and immediate effuſion of divine light: A light, which, at the ſame time it diſcovers one truth, lets the mind into whatever truth it would attend to, or turn its meditations upon. *So that we may be able*, when, by the grace of God, we ſhall enter into that bleſſed ſtate, *to comprehend*, in a manner at once, *with all ſaints, what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Chriſt, which paſſeth knowledge, and to be fill'd with all the fulneſs of God* †.

FOR as our minds will then be united to God in perfect viſion, ſo will our hearts and affections in perfect love; not only in that love which terminates upon him, but which is communicated to the ſoul, by a continual emanation of his goodneſs from him. Then ſhall the faithful *be ſatisfy'd with his goodneſs* ‡. For *the Lord taketh pleaſure in his people; they ſhall drink of thoſe rivers of pleaſure which flow at his right hand for evermore* **. *He that ſitteth on his throne in heaven ſhall dwell among them* ††. *They ſhall hunger no more, neither thirſt any more; for the lamb, which is in the midſt of the throne, ſhall feed them, and ſhall lead them into living fountains of waters* ‡‡. All theſe expreſſions import, indeed, not only that happineſs which will reſult to the ſaints in heaven, from the contemplation and enjoyment of the moſt perfect being, but from an affluence of all the bleſſings they can deſire, and greater, than it can now enter into the heart of man to conceive.

BUT as man will, in this ſtate of glory and happineſs, conſiſt of a body, as well as a ſoul, it is highly reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that he will then have agreeable entertainments for all the appetites and affections proper to the body; and particularly, that thoſe powers of it, which we now call the ſenſes, will be both invigorated to a degree, and affected with their proper objects, after a manner, far beyond what they are here capable of.

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* *Rev.* 22. 5. † *Epheſ.* 3. 18, 19. ‡ *Jer.* 31. 14. ** *Pſalm* 36. 8.
†† *Rev.* 7. 15. ‡‡ *Ch.* 7. 16, 17.

Nay, it may be queſtion'd, if then we ſhall not have certain ſenſations, whether, by an immediate energy of the divine will, or an occaſion of ſenſible objects acting upon us, altogether different from what we have here. To ſay, that we have no notion, or that we are not in the leaſt able to form any, concerning more or other ſenſes, than we now have, is an argument of no more force, than for a blind man to ſay, there is no ſuch thing as ſight or colour, becauſe he has not, nor can ever have, while he continues blind, any manner of idea concerning them. If the power or wiſdom of God can effect things beyond the capacity of men to conceive, and his goodneſs ſhall incline him to effect them in one caſe; why not in another; and in as great a variety of inſtances, as he thinks fit?

It may not be improbable, that the ſoul at preſent is rather reſtrain'd, as to the proper operations of it, by reaſon of its union with a groſs and corruptible body, which preſſeth it down; and that after it is diſengag'd from this incumbrance, and render'd capable of acting with its full force, a greater number of ſenſations will not ſo much be added to it, by the poſitive will of God, as reſult from the natural and genuine powers originally communicated to it by God.

This reflection may be of ſome uſe to thoſe, who, having ſeldom or never accuſtom'd themſelves to meditate on abſtract ſubjects, or perhaps on any thing but body, or the objects of ſenſe that ſurround them, look upon death as a kind of annihilation; which, by diſſolving the union between their ſouls and bodies, puts a final period to the ſenſible pleaſures they now taſte, and wherein they place all their delight and ſatisfaction. While they are therefore in the body, and have the uſe of theſe ſenſes, they are reſolv'd to make the moſt of them, and to gratify them ſo long, and as much, as they can. For the ſame reaſon, they ſay with the libertines in the book of wiſdom; *Let us enjoy the good things that are preſent; let none of us go without his part of voluptuouſneſs.*

But this, to ſay nothing as to the impiety of it, is a very falſe and irregular way of reaſoning, as being only founded on a notion, that the ſenſations of the ſoul depend upon its union with the body; whereas there is great reaſon to ſuſpect, that union rather obſtructs, or limits the operations of the ſoul; and to believe, that when the ſoul is diſcharg'd from its preſent confinement, and united to a glorify'd body, it will not only have a greater number of ſenſations, but its taſte of them will be much more exquiſite and affecting.

An objection here ariſes, which it may not be improper for me to take ſome notice of. It is ask'd, if the ſoul be united to God in a future ſtate of happineſs after the intimate manner we have repreſented, it will be neceſſary, by way of preparation for ſuch a union, that it ſhould be perfectly freed from all impurity and diſorder, that ſo it may be preſented to Chriſt *holy and undefil'd, without ſpot or blemiſh.* It is farther queſtion'd when, or how this purgation of the ſoul is made? Whether at the article of death, by ſome ſpecial grace of the Holy Spirit; or by its being put under ſome proper courſe of diſcipline, for a certain interval of time after death.

Those of the reform'd church generally hold, that after this life there is no future ſpace either of probation or medicinal chaſtiſement; that God may therefore, by a ſpecial operation of his ſanctifying grace, infuſe a habit of charity or holineſs into the ſoul of a dying perſon, whereby it ſhall be qualify'd to enter immediately into heaven, and have communion with him.

It is argued, on the other hand, that, according to the natural courſe of things, which God generally leaves them to, without interpoſing, by a miraculous power, to prevent the ordinary effects of them, the repentance of a dying ſinner, how fervent ſoever his charity or zeal may be, yet cannot, in all reſpects, alter the natural ſtate of his ſoul, or any one habitual diſpoſition of it. And the beſt chriſtian being ſubject to one or other predominant paſſion, it is ſuppos'd he will naturally retain ſome remains at leaſt of it when he dies, and carry them into the other world along with him. So that there will be a neceſſity, according to this way of reaſoning, that, before the ſouls of men can be prepar'd to enter into heaven, they muſt paſs through ſome intermediate and previous ſtate of purgation.

If there were any weight in this argument, the doctrine of purgatory would, in a ſenſe at leaſt, have ſome reaſonable foundation. But there are ſeveral exceptions which lie againſt it.

1. It has no foundation in ſcripture; or, if it had, it would hold only for the purgation of the ſoul in a future ſtate, and not as it is aſſerted by the Papiſts, for a purgatorial or external fire. For what contact can there be between a ſoul, and any parts of matter, however agitated or ſubtile.

2. Tho' in this life God acts, in the diſpenſations of his grace, by virtue of certain general laws, and according to a certain order; yet even here he ſometimes interpoſes by an extraordinary grace: But in caſe he did not, we cannot argue from the manner of his dealing with men through the whole courſe of their lives, and while they are confeſſedly in a ſtate of probation, to what he will do when a period is put to this ſtate.

3. That the ſcriptures repreſent good men, as paſſing immediately after this life into a ſtate of happineſs *.

4. If this belief, that a future preparation of the ſoul for the heavenly ſtate is neceſſary, ſhould happen to be entertain'd; yet in caſe it be not abus'd to any ſuperſtitious purpoſes, or ſuppos'd to imply a ſtate of puniſhment to the ſoul after this life, as it may be thought a doctrine, conſider'd in itſelf, not altogether without ſome reaſonable foundation, there appears to be ſtill leſs danger or impiety in embracing it.

Chap. V.

Of the future puniſhments threaten'd in the Goſpel.

As the chriſtian religion propoſes the moſt powerful and engaging motives of obedience to men, ſo the nature and duration of the puniſhments, which it threatens to the diſobedient, are ſuch, as cannot fail of affecting all conſiderate perſons, in the moſt ſenſible and awakening manner: They conſiſt in the excluſion of wicked men, ſo long as they continue in being, from the preſence and enjoyment of God, and in their ſuffering all the pains which a ſoul awaken'd into a lively ſenſe of its guilt, and a body ſo temper'd, that it dwells in everlaſting burnings without being conſum'd, is capable of.

What adds to theſe torments, both of loſs and pain, is the rage of an endleſs and fruitleſs deſpair; a deſpair of ever ſeeing a period put to them, I do not ſay by a change of condition, but even by an utter extinction of being: That to a ſinner, under the ſentence of damnation, dreadful as the thoughts of annihilation muſt neceſſarily be in itſelf, would be a deſirable way of loſing his ſoul. But the eternity of hell torments, which leaves not ſo much as room to the damn'd for taking refuge in ſo miſerable a comfort, is as plainly reveal'd in ſcripture as the nature of thoſe puniſhments.

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* *Acts* 24. 4. *Phil.* 1. 2, 3. *Rom.* 8. 18. *Rev.* 1. 13.

I am ſenſible, divines, whoſe office it is to inſiſt upon this doctrine, are ſometimes charg'd with a deſign rather of terrifying people, eſpecially weak or ignorant people, into a ſenſe of their duty, than of perſuading them to the practice of it upon calm and rational motives. And perhaps there may be ſome ground for this imputation, when they, whoſe office it is to inſtruct the people, wholly addreſs themſelves to their paſſions; or indiſtinctly collect and apply all the interminations they find in ſcripture concerning future puniſhment, out of their proper place, or after a manner, which diſcovers rather an indiſcreet or intemperate zeal, than a ſound knowledge.

BUT this is no argument, why a doctrine, ſo expreſsly reveal'd and inculcated in the goſpel, ſhould not, on all proper occaſions, be aſſerted; a doctrine of ſo great influence upon the minds and conduct of men, and which we are ſo much caution'd to avoid the effects of by him, who could not be ſuſpected of impoſing upon us by any groundleſs or falſe terrors.

HOWEVER, ſince there have been certain objections rais'd, which are not thought altogether contemptible, both in reference to the nature and duration of hell torments, it may not here be improper to conſider, in a few words, the force of them.

IT is argued, in the former reſpect, that the property of fire is to conſume the body upon which it feeds, and to ſeparate the parts of it; and yet the body of one, who is ſentenc'd to the flames of hell, is ſuppos'd to be ever tormented in them, without conſumption, or any ſeparation of parts, or (which are here only to be conſider'd) the conſtituent parts of it.

WE grant, our bodies, according to their preſent temper and construction, are liable to be diſſolv'd by the particles of fire entring the pores of them. But why may not God render both the bodies of the wicked, and the fire wherein they ſhall be condemn'd to ſuffer, of a different kind or contexture from what they are here? Why may not the particles of their bodies be render'd ſo ſolid, that they ſhall not be capable of attrition; or the ſtructure of their organs ſo compact, that the particles of fire ſhall not have ſufficient power to break or divide them? Or why, indeed, is it neceſſary, that the fire, wherein the wicked are to ſuffer, ſhould have any other qualities or effects like thoſe, which we obſerve in culinary fires here; except ſuch, as are proper to give us the like ſenſation of pain: Which God, if he pleaſes, may indifferently make water, or any other body, the inſtrument of.

The pains which we feel, not ariſing from the action of ſenſible objects upon us, but ſolely from the law which God has eſtabliſh'd, that ſuch impreſſions from external objects, wherewith the body maintains any commerce, ſhall occaſionally produce in the ſoul ſuch particular notices or modifications?

If, in anſwer to what is here objected, we conſult the authority of the holy ſcriptures, they are full and clear for the eternal duration of the bodies, as of the ſouls of the wicked in another life. *They ſhall be turn'd into hell, where the worm dieth not; and the fire is not quench'd*[*]. The fire is here repreſented, as of equal duration with the worm. But a ſoul, diveſted of a body, is not capable of ſuffering by fire; and if the words, as they evidently do, ſuppoſe the ſoul to ſuffer the pains of fire in any body, why not in the body rais'd to life again, the body proper to it? *They ſhall be caſt into the lake of fire*[†]; *and the ſmoak of their torment aſcendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no reſt day nor night*[‡]. Which words, if the bodies of the wicked were, immediately after the reſurrection, to be deſtroy'd by fire, could not admit of any reaſonable comment; becauſe could the terms *for ever and ever*, contrary to the receiv'd ſignification of them in ſcripture, be wreſted to favour this ſenſe; yet without ſuch a force upon the words, as cannot, by any rules of interpretation, be admitted, it would be impoſſible to reconcile it with a ſucceſſion of days and nights, wherein the damn'd are ſaid to have no reſt. According to the ſame expreſſion, the permanent ſtate of happineſs in heaven is repreſented, when it is ſaid, the ſaints *reſt not day and night, ſaying, holy, holy, holy*; and *that they ſerve God day and night in his temple*[**]. Should it then be granted, that the terms *everlaſting* and *eternal*, when apply'd to the deſtruction of the body, do not in themſelves neceſſarily imply any thing more, than that the body ſhall finally periſh, or be conſum'd in the flames of hell, tho' the ſame words, which are apply'd to ſignify the eternity of the joys of heaven, are us'd on the ſame occaſion, and in the ſame place, to ſignify the eternity of hell torments[††]; yet ſince the ſenſe of them is in other places directly reſtrain'd to ſignify, that the bodies of the damn'd ſhall ſurvive ſo long as their ſouls ſhall ſubſiſt in being; we are certainly oblig'd to explain them according to that determinate ſenſe, and not according to the large acceptation, wherein they may be ſometimes capable of being underſtood.

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[*] *Mark* 9. 44. [†] *Rev.* 20. 15. [‡] Ch. 14. 10, 11. [**] Ch. 2. 11.—7. 15.

[††] Εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον, *Matt.* 25. 41. Εἰς κόλασιν αἰώνιον.—Εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον, ℣. 46.

The great objection againſt the eternity of hell torments, whether the ſoul ſuffer them in the body, or out of the body, is thought to lie here; that it is difficult to reconcile them with the common ideas we have, and which the ſcriptures give us, of the divine juſtice. For what proportion is there between a momentary offence, and a puniſhment, an intenſe puniſhment, of infinite duration? Or what ſhould provoke a juſt God, who knows whereof we are made, and what frail impotent creatures we are, to inflict ſuch puniſhment upon us?

In anſwer to what is here objected, I ſhall ſatisfy my ſelf with laying down the following propoſitions.

1. That the argument from the proportion of time, between the ſpace wherein any ſin is committed, and wherein it is puniſh'd, muſt be acknowledg'd fallacious and inconcluſive, even in the opinion of thoſe who urge it. A common practice of mankind, wherein there is nothing thought criminal or unjuſt, is known to lie directly againſt it. When men are confin'd, impriſon'd, or ſequeſter'd for crimes, which have render'd them obnoxious to the ſtate, it is not conſider'd whether they committed them in a leſs or longer time, in order to adjuſt the duration of their puniſhment; but what the nature of their crimes is, and in what reſpect the ſtate has been injur'd by them. Much leſs is there any force in this argument, upon the principles of the *Origeniſts*; for if it be a reaſon, that wicked men ſhall not ſuffer eternally for their ſins, becauſe eternity bears no proportion to the time of committing them; the ſame reaſon will hold againſt their ſuffering them, for that long period of time, which the *Origeniſts* ſuppoſe will intervene before their final deliverance. In a ſtrict way of arguing upon this rule of proportion, if we purſue it in its obvious conſequences, the ſufferings of a ſinner, after this life, for a thouſand years, can no more be reconcil'd with the juſtice of God, in puniſhing him for that time, than if he were to be puniſh'd for ever.

2. That the degree or continuance of the puniſhment, which God may think fit to inflict on ſinners, does not depend ſo much on a conſideration of ſtrict juſtice, as of wiſdom, and the reaſons of his providence in governing the world. If God, as will appear in the ſequel, may juſtly puniſh, and the reaſons of his wiſdom in puniſhing will eternally ſubſiſt; which reaſons, tho' we do not know in what reſpects, or upon what conſiderations they are founded, are perfectly known to himſelf; then he will be equally juſtify'd in puniſhing to all future time, as for any long or indefinite period of time.

3. That God juſtly puniſhes ſinners for ever, as well as for wiſe reaſons reſpecting his government of the world, appears from hence,

hence; that his interminations of future and eternal puniſhments to them, can only take place in conſequence of their own choice. Life and death, bleſſing and curſing, are ſet before them; and it is left to their proper election, which of them they will prefer: Or rather, indeed, towards influencing them to chuſe the better part, they are invited, they are mov'd to do it, both by an internal principle of grace, and the outward adminiſtration of the word and ſacraments; if, after theſe expreſs denunciations of *the wrath to come* againſt them, and all the wiſe methods of divine goodneſs to ſave them, they chuſe the paths, and proceed in them with their eyes open, that lead to death; they have no ground of complaint for any injury done them. Their deſtruction is of themſelves; and they *muſt bear their own iniquity for ever and ever*. I ſhall add,

4. That, ſuppoſing it on any account conſiſtent with the juſtice of God, to threaten eternal torments to impenitent ſinners, there is one very wiſe reaſon, which we are able our ſelves to diſcover, for his threatning them. If now that men, who believe the *terrors of the Lord*, and in ſome meaſure live under an awful ſenſe of them, are not yet, on many occaſions, reſtrain'd by them from ſinning againſt God; all other conſiderations towards laying a reſtraint upon ſinners, muſt neceſſarily have been attended with leſs force and efficacy, and left them more at liberty *to walk in the ways of their hearts, and in the ſight of their eyes*. And if a wiſe governor has a right to keep his rebellious ſubjects in awe by any penalties abſolutely neceſſary to that end, the juſtice of God will, for the ſame reaſon, be acquitted, in his threatning thoſe puniſhments to ſinners, without the intermination whereof, the ends of his government could not have been attain'd.

5. That God could have no wiſe or reaſonable end in threatning, what he cannot juſtly execute. Becauſe every man's reaſon, upon his conſulting it, will inform him, that what God cannot do with the ſafety of his juſtice, the eternal rectitude and holineſs of his nature will not permit him to do. If then, as is now taken for granted, God has really threaten'd eternal puniſhments to ſinners; there is not a more clear or evident conſequence in the world, than that he may juſtly, for that very reaſon, execute his threats upon them.

I know it has been queſtion'd, notwithſtanding God has threaten'd to inflict eternal torments on ſinners, and may therefore juſtly inflict them, whether he will, after all, certainly inflict them; becauſe there is a wide difference betwixt what he may in juſtice do, and what ſtrict juſtice obliges him to do.

I would obſerve, in the firſt place, that this queſtion, when propos'd (except in order to its being confuted) by any chriſtian, is, in the nature and direct tendency of it, impious, as being plainly oppoſite to the deſign of God in his threatnings, and the very reaſon of his enacting them.

God has threaten'd to inflict eternal puniſhments upon ſinners; and yet men, who believe, or profeſs to believe, the revelation he has made to this purpoſe, pretend to queſtion, whether, after all, he will inflict them. Is not this to ſuppoſe Chriſtians under no obligation, ſtrictly ſpeaking, to believe a doctrine, which it is really the intention of God they ſhould believe; ſo far as any words or forms of ſpeech can be interpreted to ſignify his intention? Is it not to ſuppoſe, either that the God of truth has requir'd our aſſent to a falſe propoſition, or that the ſanctions given to his laws, wherein all ambiguity ought particularly to be avoided, are expreſs'd in ſuch terms, that only criticks, and men of nice ſpeculation, are able to diſcover and aſcertain the true meaning of them; and that Chriſtians have in a manner univerſally, from the firſt plantation of the goſpel to this time, interpreted them in a wrong ſenſe? Whether in oppoſition to the opinion of *Origen*, that after a long ſpace of time the damn'd will have a period put to their torments; or to a notion, which has been thought preferable by ſome moderns, that everlaſting death and deſtruction do not imply even a temporary ſuffering of any continuance to the damn'd, but their utter and final extinction at once, eſpecially of their bodies in hell fire. But if this be all that is intended by our Saviour in the goſpel by hell fire, why is it call'd *fire everlaſting?* Why, *the fire that is not quench'd?* Of what importance can it be to thoſe, who ſhall be condemn'd to that fire, whether, after the entire deſtruction both of their ſouls and bodies, or of their bodies only, it will continue burning, or be immediately quench'd? What relation had it to our Saviour's argument, or how could it any ways tend to enforce it, that the fire wherein the wicked are to ſuffer an extinction of being for their ſins, ſhall not at the ſame time be itſelf extinguiſh'd? It is much more reaſonable to believe, that the ſcriptures being deſign'd for the inſtruction of mankind in general, the words of them are to be taken in their moſt natural and obvious ſignification; and even where we only argue from the force of ſuch words conſider'd in themſelves, without regard to the context, or other paſſages, which determine the particular ſenſe wherein they are to be underſtood.

Let us proceed upon either of theſe ſuppoſitions, we cannot avoid one of the following inconveniences. To ſay, God has requir'd men to believe what is falſe, is to render his veracity ſu-

ſuſpected; to ſay, he has requir'd men to believe what is true, but expreſs'd this truth in ſo ambiguous terms, and in a caſe too of the laſt conſequence to them, that people of ordinary capacities will naturally miſtake the ſenſe of them, and perſons of all capacities have hitherto in fact, almoſt without exception, miſtaken the ſenſe of them; this is to object what is no leſs injurious to his attributes of wiſdom and goodneſs.

It can only be ſaid, in anſwer to the former inconvenience, that the legiſlator, is always ſuppos'd to retain a power of executing or remitting any threaten'd penalty, in his own hands; and that he may determine himſelf, as he ſees cauſe, either way, without incurring the leaſt cenſure for breach of faith. And, we know, it may ſometimes very well conſiſt with reaſons of government to indemnify delinquents, by ſpecial acts of grace or pardon. This is the ground, and the only ground, upon which ſtate criminals can hope to eſcape the legal penalties, which they have render'd themſelves obnoxious to, and upon which, perhaps, the magiſtrate can alone juſtify his veracity, in pardoning ſuch criminals, contrary to the expreſs ſanction of the law.

But becauſe the nature of civil government requires there ſhould be ſuch a diſpenſing power reſerv'd to the ſovereign, (whether the ſovereignty is lodg'd in one or more hands) and that it may therefore be juſtly executed by him; the caſe is very different, when we argue concerning the deſign of the ſupreme legiſlator to remit or execute his threats in another life; becauſe, tho' we know, in particular caſes, the reaſons why the civil magiſtrate may be induc'd to pardon ſtate criminals, and ought, perhaps, if he be a wiſe magiſtrate, to pardon them; yet we know nothing concerning the reaſons of government, according to which God may think fit hereafter, and for ever to regulate his conduct; and which may always hold good for continuing the puniſhments he has threaten'd, and in all reſpects.

The methods therefore of proceeding by the civil magiſtrate againſt delinquents, from which the main argument has been drawn to ſhew, that God may, conſiſtently with his juſtice and truth, not inflict what he has threaten'd, cannot give ſinners any ground to hope, that God will one time or other put a period to their ſufferings: His threatning the perpetuity of them, eſpecially if he have us'd any ſolemn aſſeverations to that end, is rather an argument, that there are very wiſe and good reaſons, why, according to the future ſcheme of providence, they ſhould be perpetual.

2. As this ſuppoſition, that poſſibly God may not, after all, inflict, what he has expreſſly threaten'd he will inflict, is injurious to his authority, as oppoſing the deſign of his threats; and to his

veracity or wiſdom, as highly reflecting at leaſt on one of theſe attributes. It may alſo be attended with very pernicious effects, towards encouraging wicked men in their ſins and impieties: Not that there is any danger in it to thoſe, who will give things a ſtrict and impartial examination; but we have too frequent occaſions of obſerving, how apt the corrupt part of mankind are to admit, without any due enquiry, ſuch principles as directly or indirectly tend to favour corruption. Numbers of people ſometimes eſpouſe doctrines, at other times, the cauſe of men for advancing certain doctrines, concerning which, if they are requir'd to explain themſelves, their notions are, at the beſt, very indiſtinct and confus'd, and many of them appear to have no notion at all.

They, who expect the world ſhould be govern'd by reaſon, are ſurpriz'd to ſee how much force, inclination, or intereſt, have uſurp'd upon the rights and authority of it. However, ſince men would ſtill generally be thought to act like reaſonable agents, where any ill deſign or practice is to be defended, as it is not capable of a defence from reaſon, people are willing to take up with any appearances of it, and to improve them as much as they can. When ſinners are therefore told, eſpecially when they are told by perſons of any conſiderable character in the world for their parts or learning, or who have ſome eminent ſtation in the church, that God may poſſibly, after all, not execute what he has threaten'd; the inclination of ſuch a ſinner to believe, what he now apprehends it his intereſt, ſhould prove true, will naturally give a ſuggeſtion of this kind a greater force than it ought to have. The ſofteſt thing that can be ſaid by any one, who affects to render himſelf more popular by ſuch a method, or upon what view ſoever he acts, is, that he inſinuates to the libertine, there may poſſibly be ſome hopes for him in reſerve after this life, tho' the ſcriptures have not given the leaſt inſinuation of any ſuch hope, or of any thing like it.

3. This argument, that poſſibly God may not do, what he has expreſſly declar'd he will do, in reference to the puniſhments of a future life, if it prove any thing, proves too much. It may, with equal reaſon, be inferr'd from it, that poſſibly he may not hereafter inflict any puniſhments, he has threaten'd, as that he may not inflict the eternal puniſhments, he has threaten'd.

4. Upon a wrong ſuppoſition, that God may, with the ſafety of all his attributes, concern'd in this argument, remit the future puniſhments, he has threaten'd to ſinners wholly or in part; yet we are to make a diſtinction between his pardoning grace, as to external puniſhments to be inflicted on them, and ſuch puniſhments, as are the natural or neceſſary effects of their guilt, or of the ſinful habits which they have contracted. However, it may be

ſuppos'd to affect the juſtice of God, that he ſhould, by a poſitive act of his will, eternally inflict the grievous pains he has threaten'd; yet his juſtice is not at all concern'd in this latter caſe, but only his goodneſs; the effects whereof being arbitrary and free, this general idea of it may ſerve to anſwer all the arguments againſt the eternity of hell torments, which have been, or are commonly founded upon this attribute.

If there are any perſons, who ſtill make it a doubt, tho' there is no foundation for ſuch a doubt either in reaſon or ſcripture, whether God may not, and whether he therefore will not, finally diſpenſe with his own interminations of future puniſhment, I cannot addreſs my ſelf to them in more proper and forcible words, than in thoſe of the prophet *Iſaiah* to the libertines and free-thinkers of his age. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye ſcornful men;——Becauſe ye have ſaid, we have made a covenant with hell, and with death are we at agreement; when the overflowing ſcourge ſhall paſs through, it ſhall not come to us; for we have made lies our refuge, and under falſhood have we hid our ſelves.——Therefore thus ſaith the Lord, your covenant with death ſhall be diſanull'd, and your agreement with hell not ſtand* *.

Upon the whole matter, God has threaten'd eternal puniſhments to impenitent ſinners; it is therefore his intention that we ſhould believe their puniſhments eternal. Inſtead of diſputing, whether it may conſiſt with his juſtice, his wiſdom, or his goodneſs, to inflict them; or whether he will inflict them; it is much rather incumbent on us to conſider, what we ſhall do to eſcape them; and at the ſame time, how we may ſecure our title to heaven and everlaſting life; to that bleſſed and glorious ſtate, where, according to the loweſt repreſentation made in the holy ſcriptures of it, *there ſhall be no more death, neither ſorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain.*

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* *Iſaiah* 28. 14, 15, 18.

FINIS.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM